NEKOGAHARA

STRAY CAT SAMURAI

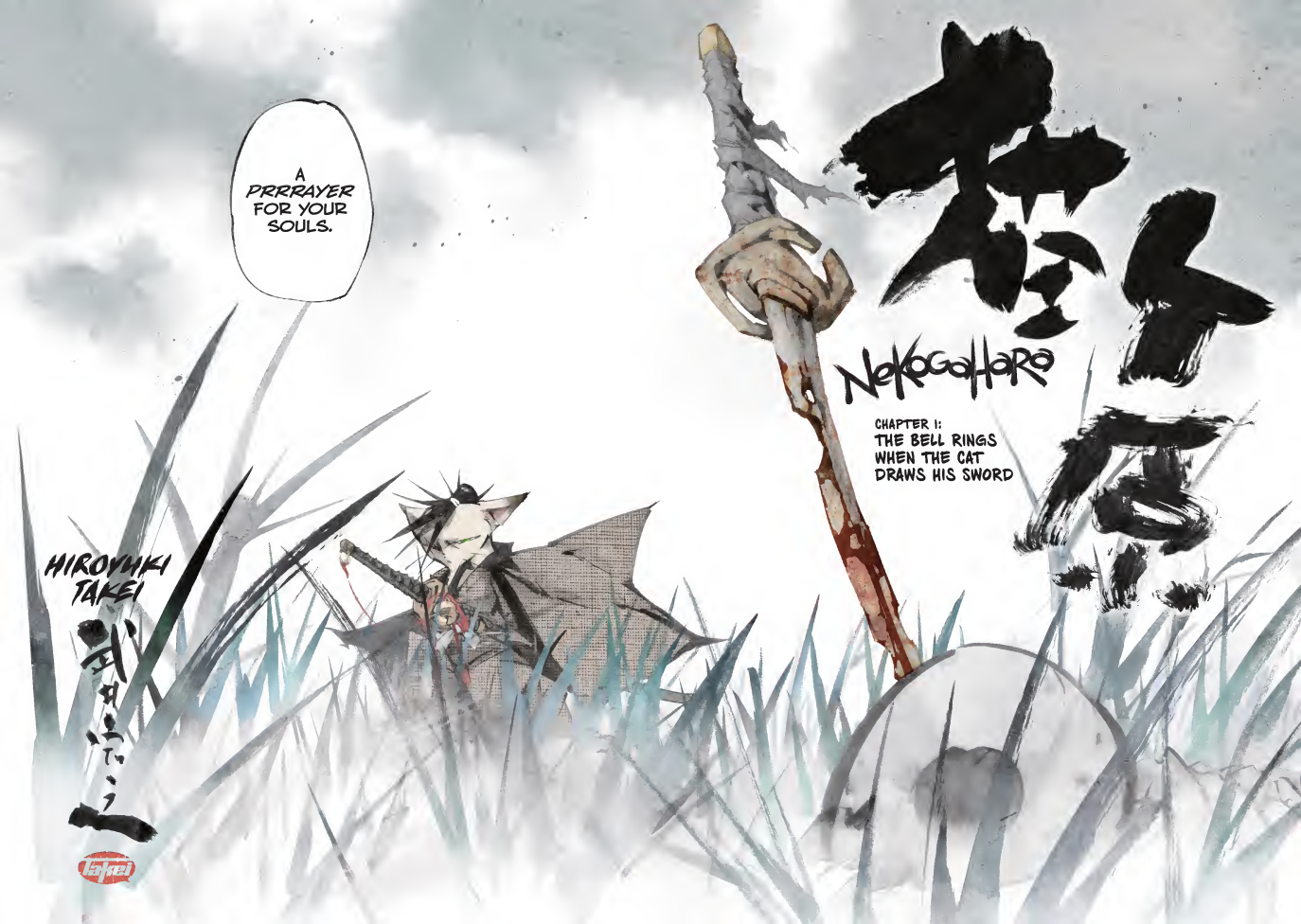
1

HIROYUKI TAKEI

CREATOR OF *SHAMAN KING*

YOU'VE GOT QUITE A FINE ARTICLE HANGING FROM YER SWORD THERE, O GREAT SAMURAI.
HEH HEH...
LEAVE IT HERE. YOU HAVEN'T HAD A MASTER IN AGES.
A BELLED CAT, EH?
ALING

YOU... YOU'RE TOUGH...
HNGH...
WHAT... WHAT'S YER NAME?
...NORA-CHIYO.
KAPOW
POW
POW
POW
POW


A PRRRAYER FOR YOUR SOULS.
HIROYUKI TAKEI
NEKOGAHORO
CHAPTER 1:
THE BELL RINGS WHEN THE CAT DRAWS HIS SWORD

CHAPTER 1: THE BELL RINGS WHEN THE CAT DRAWS HIS SWORD PAGE 1

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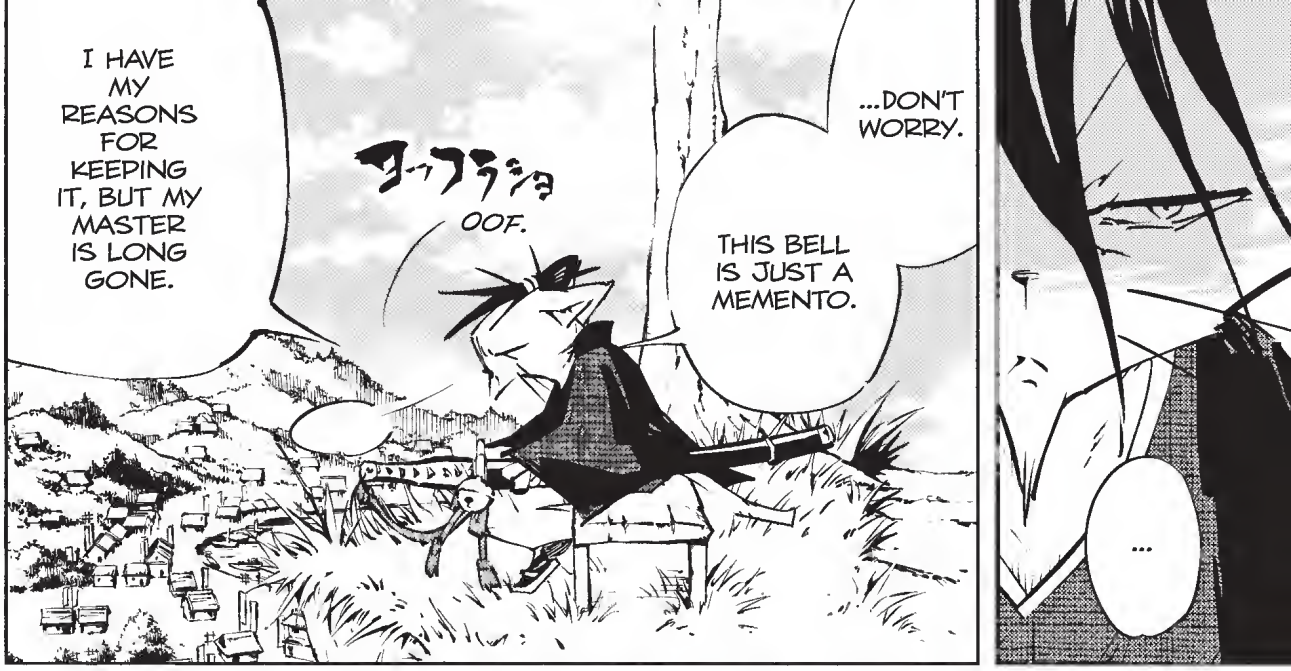
HEY! YOUR DUMPLINGS ARE GETTING SMALLER AGAIN, POPS!
IS THIS WHAT YOU SERVE YOUR CUSTOMERS ?!
IS IT?!
WE BUST OUR TAILS OUT THERE IN THOSE FIELDS! HOW'RE WE SUPPOSED TO KEEP WORKIN' IF THIS IS ALL YOU FEED US?!
BAM
SAKÉ

TAXES JUST WENT UP THE OTHER DAY!
BAH
WAZZAT?! TAXES AGAIN, YOU OLD MOG?!
EEEK! PAWPA!
BUT BUSINESS HASN'T BEEN SO GOOD THESE DAYS, AND THEY RAISED TAXES ON US AGAIN.
YES, I'M SO SORRY, SIRS.
DOGGONE IT, TIMES LIKE THIS, A CAT'S GOTTA DRINK JUST TO KEEP GOING!
NO KIDDING! HE'S A DISGRACE TO TOMKIND!
DAMN THAT LANDLORD! HE THINKS HE OWNS US JUST 'CAUSE HE'S GOT PEOPLE ABOVE HIM?!
I WISH HE'D DIE!
ALING!
!

...HUH?
EXCUSE ME.
A CUP OF CHILLED TEA, PLEASE.
GRK!
HE...! HE'S GOT A BELL!!
THE SYMBOL OF A KEPT CAT!!!

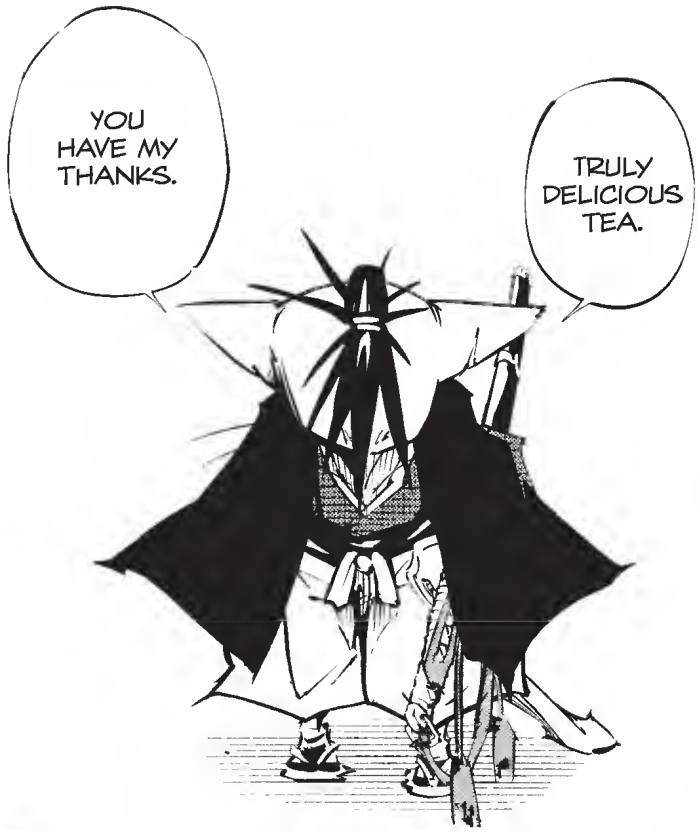

I HAVE MY REASONS FOR KEEPING IT, BUT MY MASTER IS LONG GONE.
OOF.
THIS BELL IS JUST A MEMENTO.
...DON'T WORRY.
...

...
...WHA–

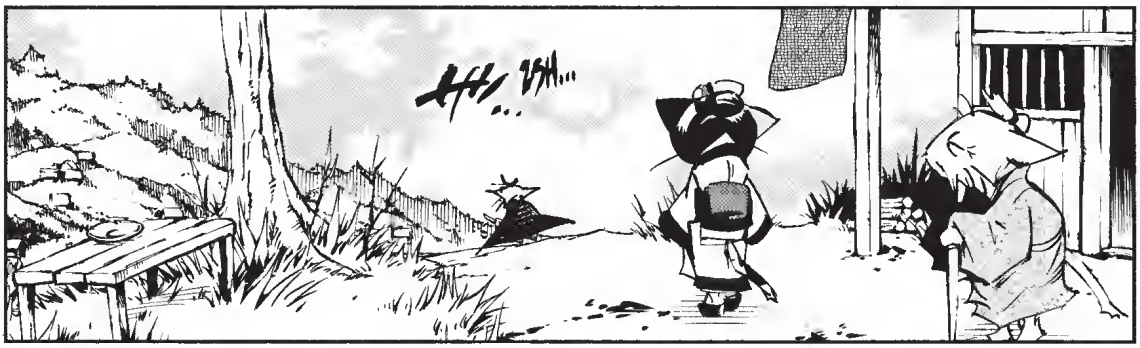
NYA HA HA HA HA
SO YOU'RE ONE OF THEM STRAY SAMURAI THAT KEEP POPPING UP THESE DAYS?
I HEARD A LOT OF YOU ARE OUT OF WORK WITH THE WAR OVER!
WHAT'RE YA SCARING US LIKE THAT FOR?! I WAS AFRAID THE LANDLORD SENT YA!

CLUNK
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE THEM, OSAMURAI-SAN. THE CATS AROUND HERE DON'T HAVE MUCH BY WAY OF MANNERS.

WORD IS, HIS MASTER WON THE WAR, AND HE'S LETTING IT GO TO HIS HEAD.
YOU SEE THAT MANSION IN THE DISTANCE? THE ONE THAT LOOKS LIKE A CASTLE?
BUT THAT'S ONLY BECAUSE OF OUR LAND-LORD.
LAP
LAP
CATS WHO LIVE UNDER PEOPLE DO LIVE A DIFFERENT LIFE.
HE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT HE OWNS THE LAND TO MAKE THE REST OF US RAISE HIS CROPS. HE RENTS IT OUT, THEN SENDS TAX COLLECTORS, SWORDS IN HAND, TO TAKE ALL OUR MONEY.


YOU HAVE MY THANKS.
TRULY DELICIOUS TEA.

WHERE WILL YOU BE GOING FROM HERE?
OH, BUT THAT'S NONE OF YOUR CONCERN, IS IT, OSAMURAI-SAN?
...

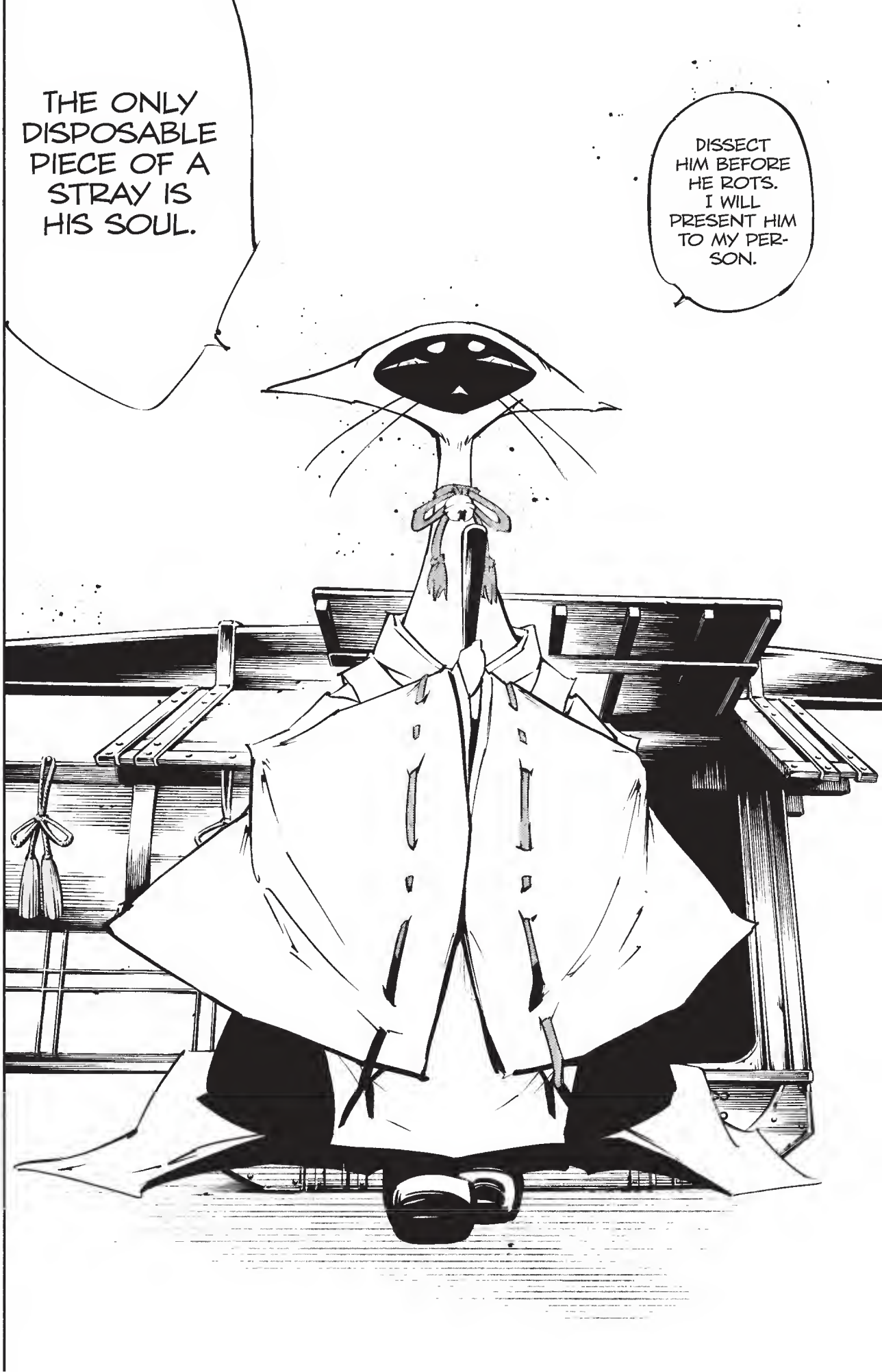

HM, YES...

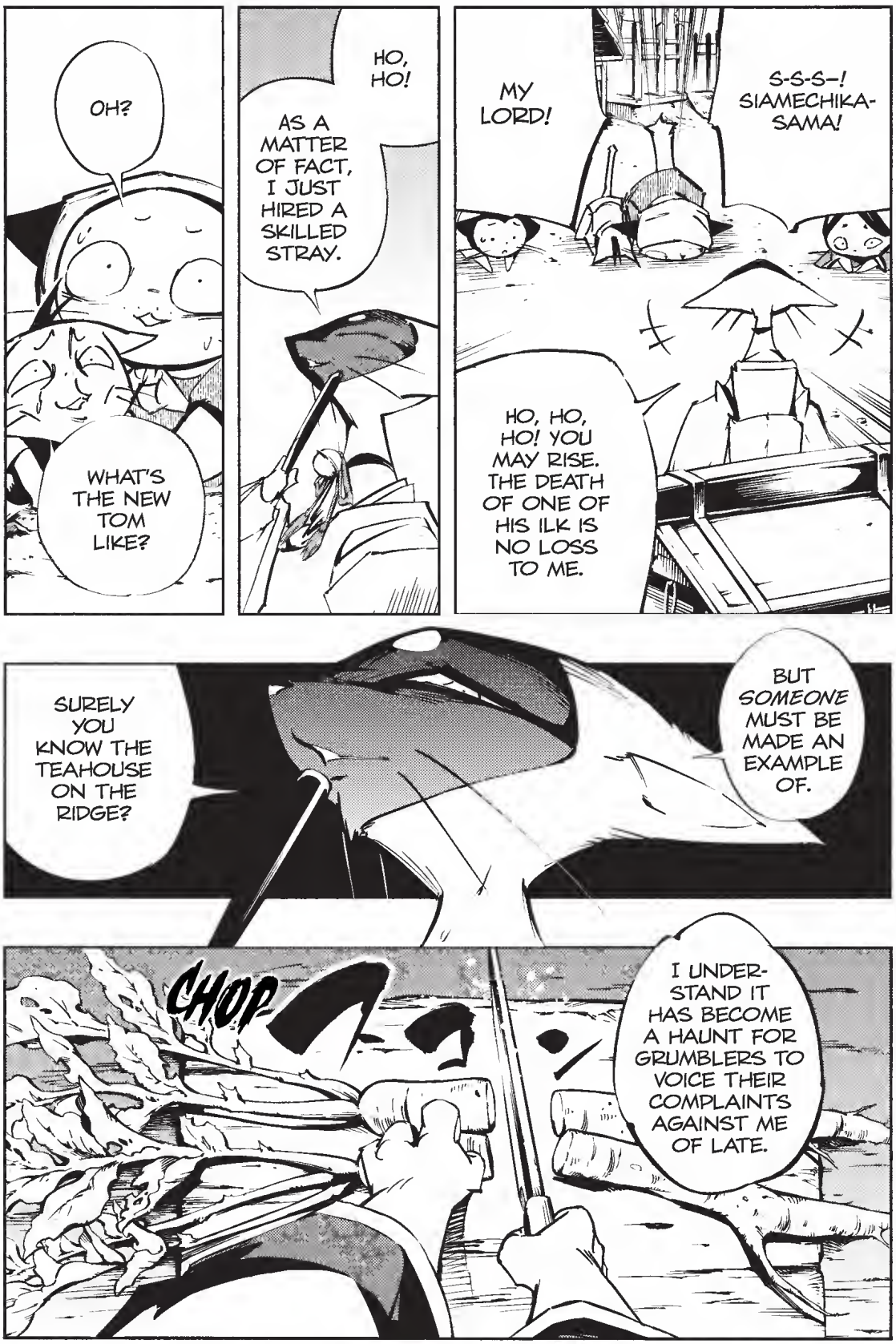
MROW-RRR?!!

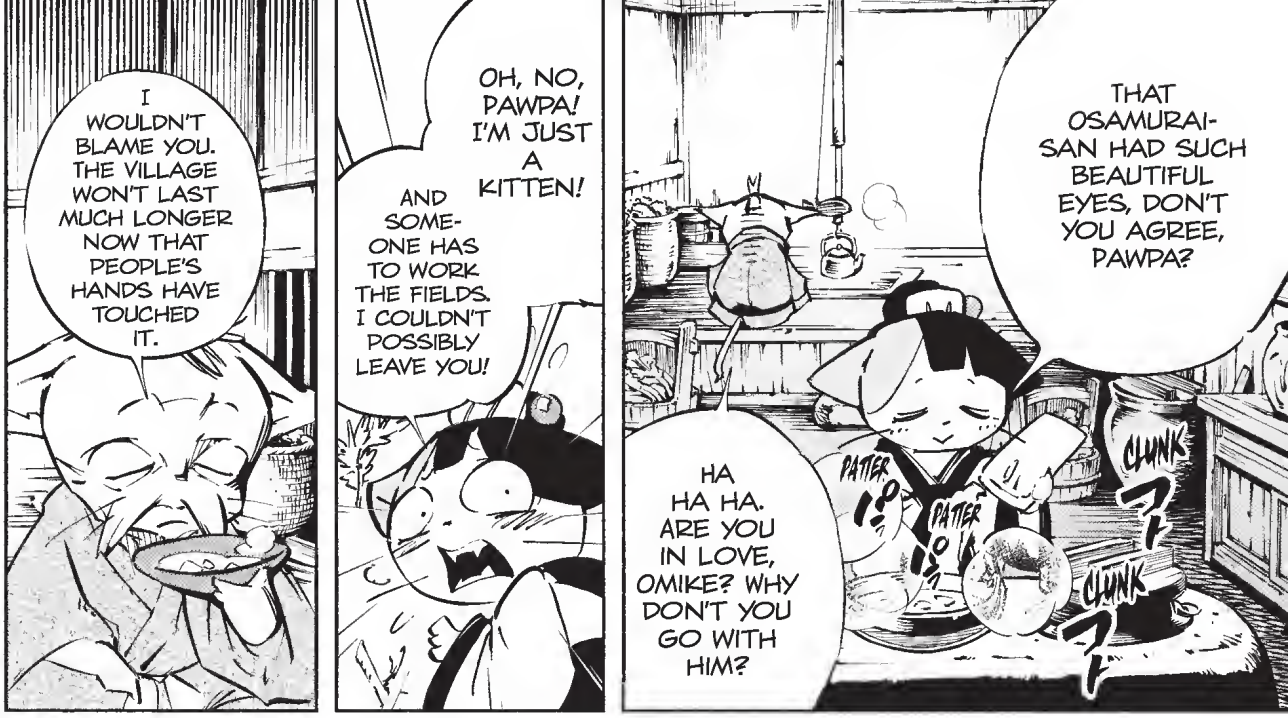
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELF.

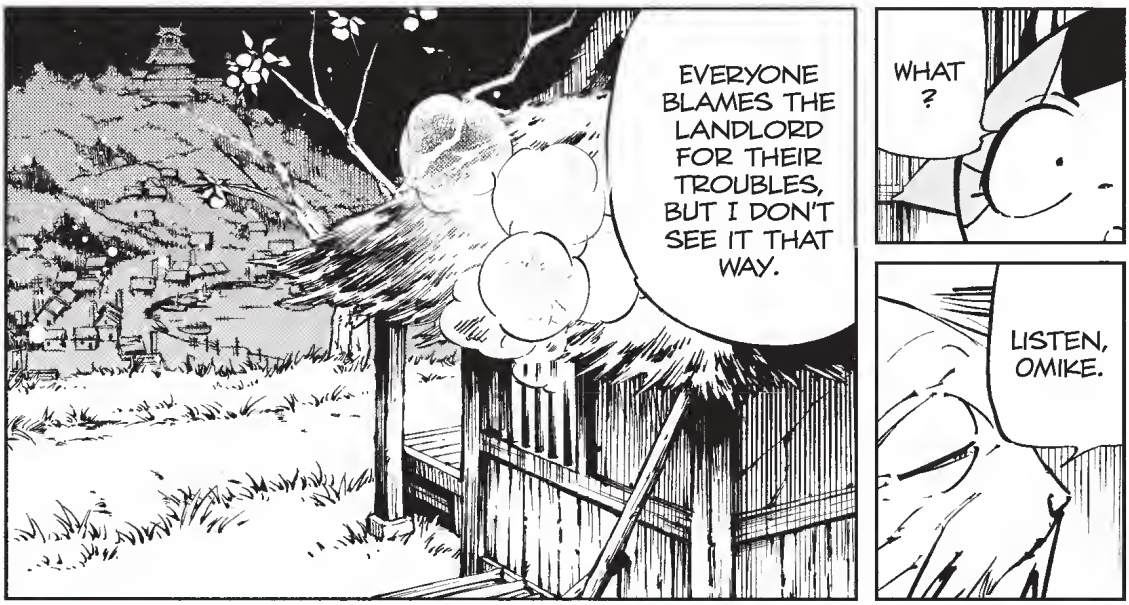
HE'S DEAD! THE LAND-LORD'S TAX COLLECTOR!
BAM
IT'S ONE-EARED KATA-HACHI!
I HATED HIS GUTS, POOR CAT.
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
WHOA, WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING? NO, SERIOUSLY!

HIS FUR FOR A WRITING BRUSH.
WE'LL USE HIS BONES FOR MEDICINE.
HIS SKIN FOR A SHAMISEN.
WHEN I GET WIND OF IT... THEN WHAT?
!
BUT THIS IS BAD NEWS...
WHEN THE LAND-LORD GETS WIND OF THIS...
URP!


THE ONLY DISPOSABLE PIECE OF A STRAY IS HIS SOUL.
DISSECT HIM BEFORE HE ROTS. I WILL PRESENT HIM TO MY PER-SON.

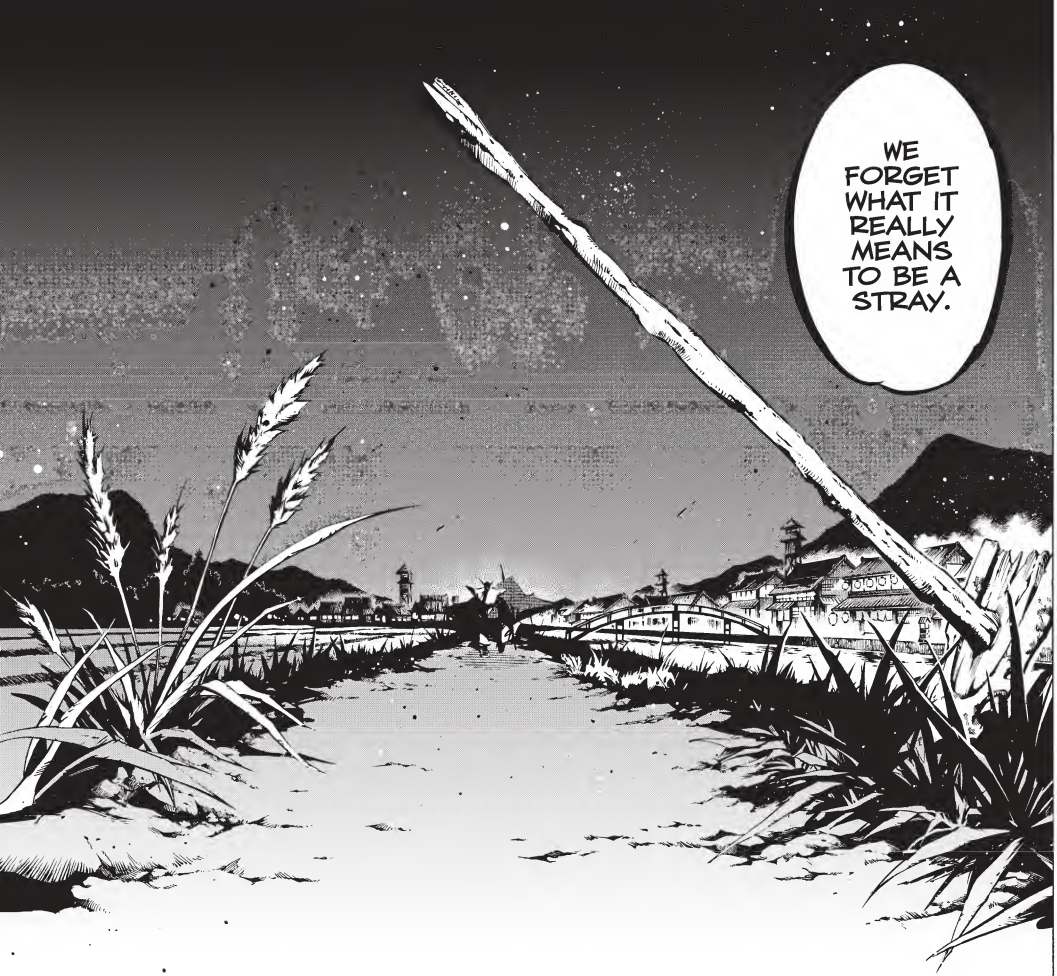

OH?
WHAT'S THE NEW TOM LIKE?
HO, HO!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I JUST HIRED A SKILLED STRAY.
MY LORD!
S-S-S-! SIAMECHIKA-SAMA!
HO, HO, HO! YOU MAY RISE. THE DEATH OF ONE OF HIS ILK IS NO LOSS TO ME.
SURELY YOU KNOW THE TEAHOUSE ON THE RIDGE?
BUT SOMEONE MUST BE MADE AN EXAMPLE OF.
CHOP
I UNDER-STAND IT HAS BECOME A HAUNT FOR GRUMBLERS TO VOICE THEIR COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME OF LATE.


I WOULDN'T BLAME YOU. THE VILLAGE WON'T LAST MUCH LONGER NOW THAT PEOPLE'S HANDS HAVE TOUCHED IT.
OH, NO, PAWPA! I'M JUST A KITTEN!
AND SOME-ONE HAS TO WORK THE FIELDS. I COULDN'T POSSIBLY LEAVE YOU!
THAT OSAMURAI-SAN HAD SUCH BEAUTIFUL EYES, DON'T YOU AGREE, PAWPA?
PATTER
PATTER
CLUNK
CLUNK
HA HA HA. ARE YOU IN LOVE, OMIKE? WHY DON'T YOU GO WITH HIM?

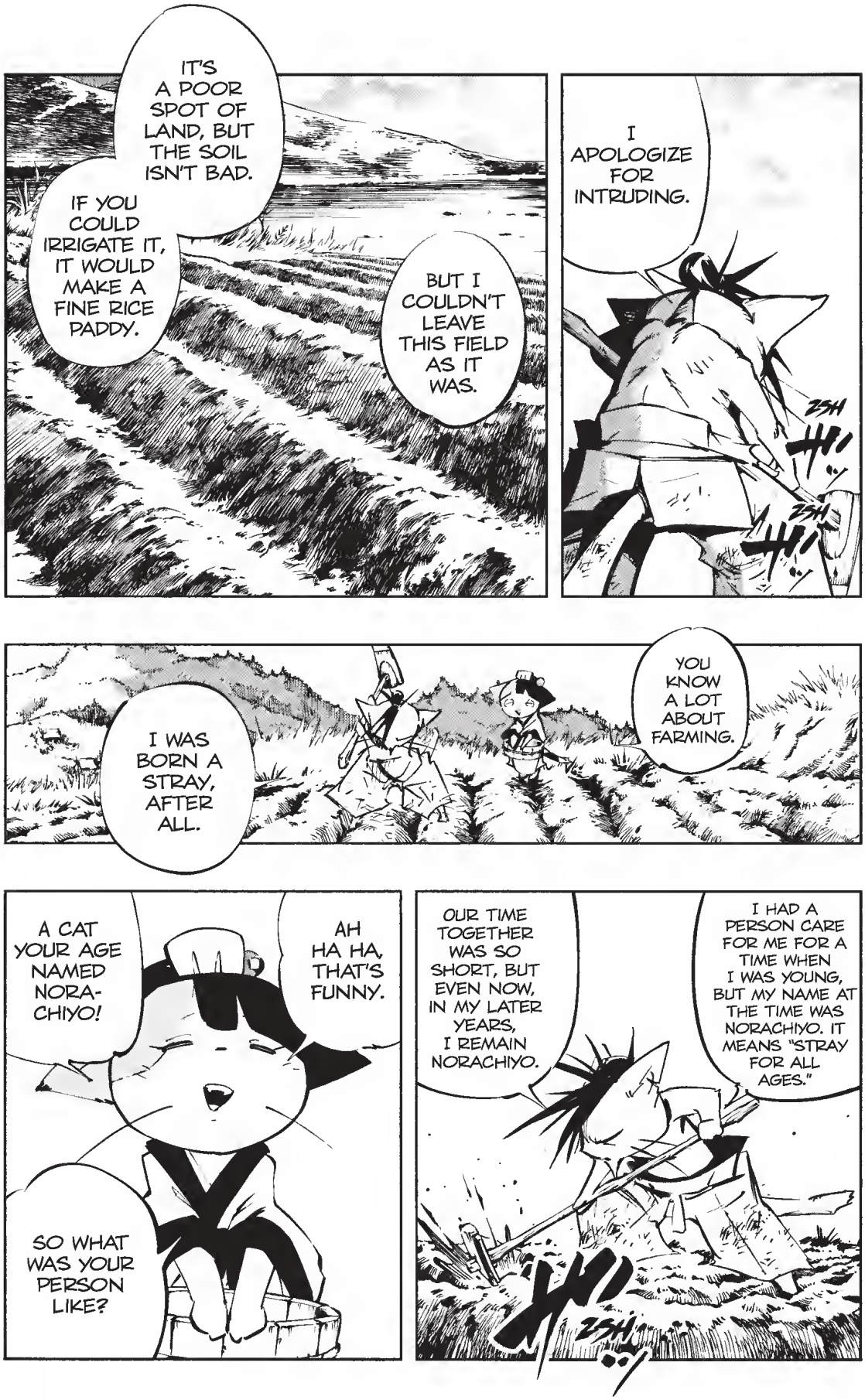

EVERYONE BLAMES THE LANDLORD FOR THEIR TROUBLES, BUT I DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY.
WHAT?
LISTEN, OMIKE.

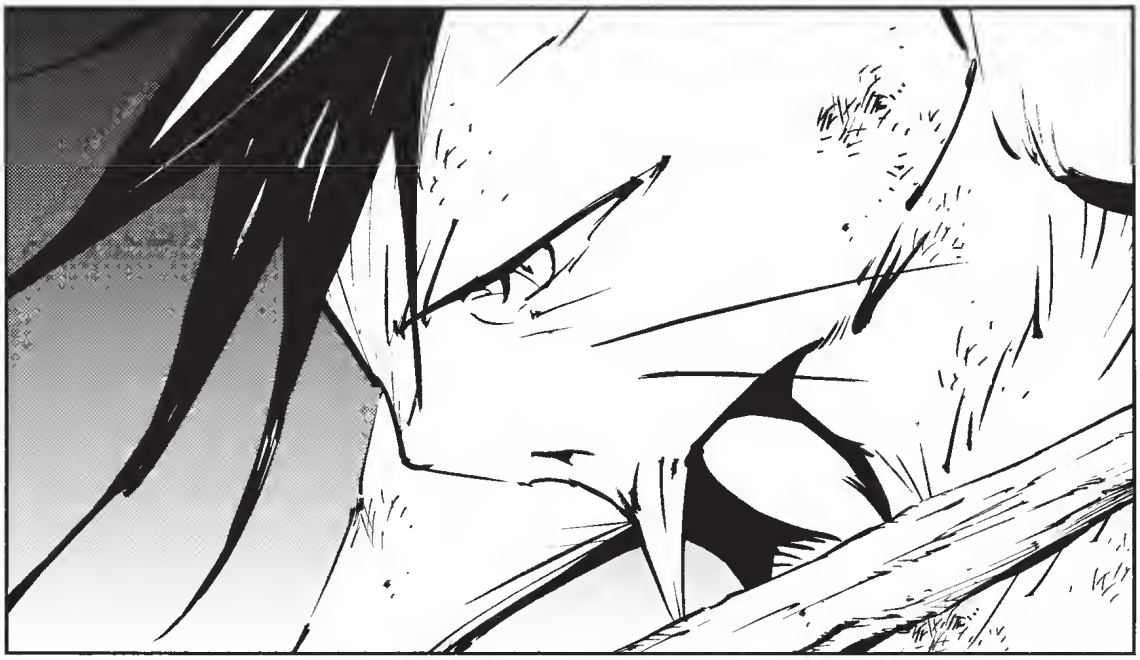
BUT THEY DON'T, AND FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THAT IT'S EASIER TO LIVE OFF THE PEOPLE'S SCRAPS.
IF THEY REALLY HATED THE TAXES, ALL THEY'D HAVE TO DO IS LEAVE HERE AND STAND ON THEIR OWN PAWS.

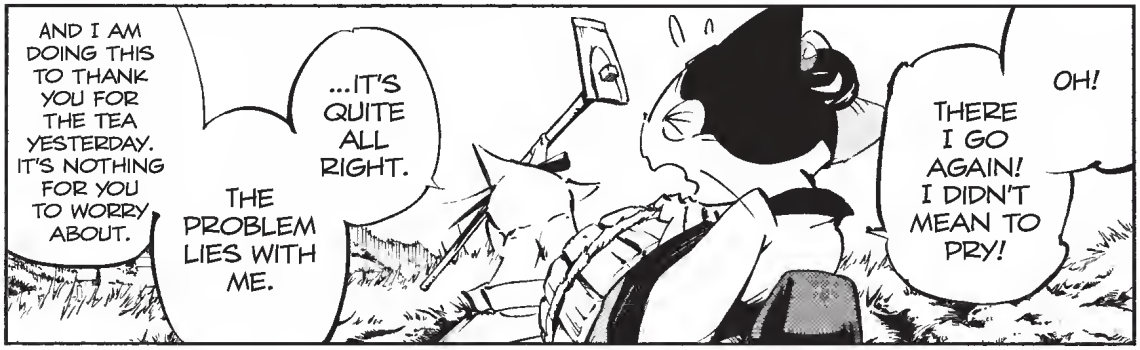
TO US STRAYS, THE POWER THAT PEOPLE BRING WITH THEM IS ENORMOUS.
WE CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT POWER TO GAIN A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF WEALTH, BUT AT THE COST OF OUR FREEDOM.
SO WE SPEND OUR DAYS GRUMBLING, DROWNING OURSELVES IN PLEASURES, AND GROWING FURTHER AWAY FROM REALITY.


WE FORGET WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE A STRAY.

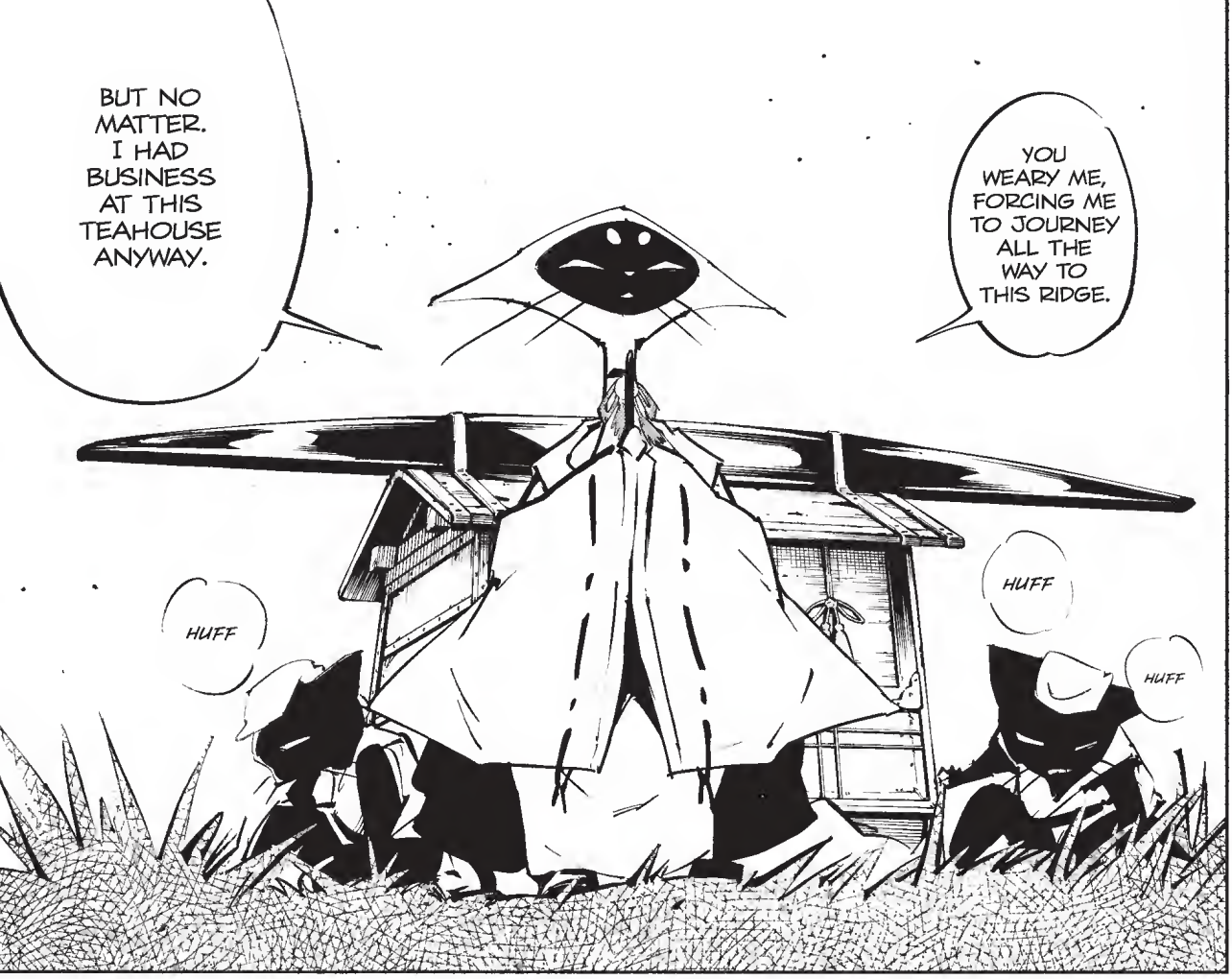
OH.
IT'S YOU, OSAMURAI-SAN.
SHOONK


IT'S A POOR SPOT OF LAND, BUT THE SOIL ISN'T BAD.
IF YOU COULD IRRIGATE IT, IT WOULD MAKE A FINE RICE PADDY.
BUT I COULDN'T LEAVE THIS FIELD AS IT WAS.
I APOLOGIZE FOR INTRUDING.
ZSH
HI!
ZSH
HI!
YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT FARMING.
I WAS BORN A STRAY, AFTER ALL.
A CAT YOUR AGE NAMED NORA-CHIYO!
AH HA HA, THAT'S FUNNY.
SO WHAT WAS YOUR PERSON LIKE?
OUR TIME TOGETHER WAS SO SHORT, BUT EVEN NOW, IN MY LATER YEARS, I REMAIN NORACHIYO.
I HAD A PERSON CARE FOR ME FOR A TIME WHEN I WAS YOUNG, BUT MY NAME AT THE TIME WAS NORACHIYO. IT MEANS "STRAY FOR ALL AGES."
ZSH
HI!

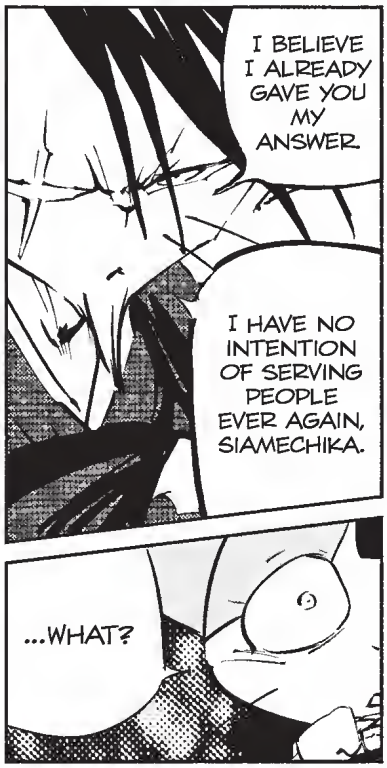


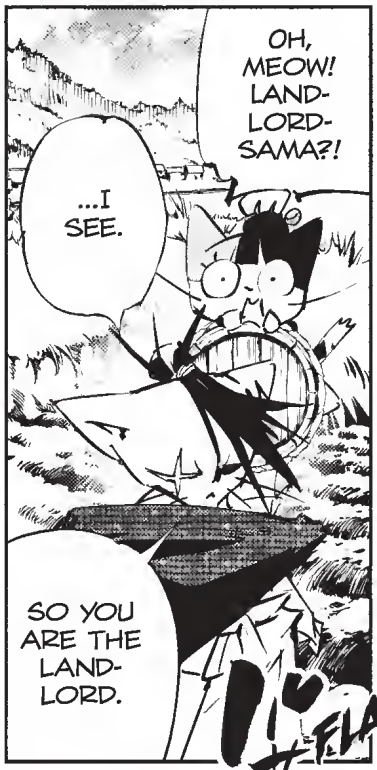

AND I AM DOING THIS TO THANK YOU FOR THE TEA YESTERDAY. IT'S NOTHING FOR YOU TO WORRY ABOUT.
...IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT.
THE PROBLEM LIES WITH ME.
OH!
THERE I GO AGAIN! I DIDN'T MEAN TO PRY!

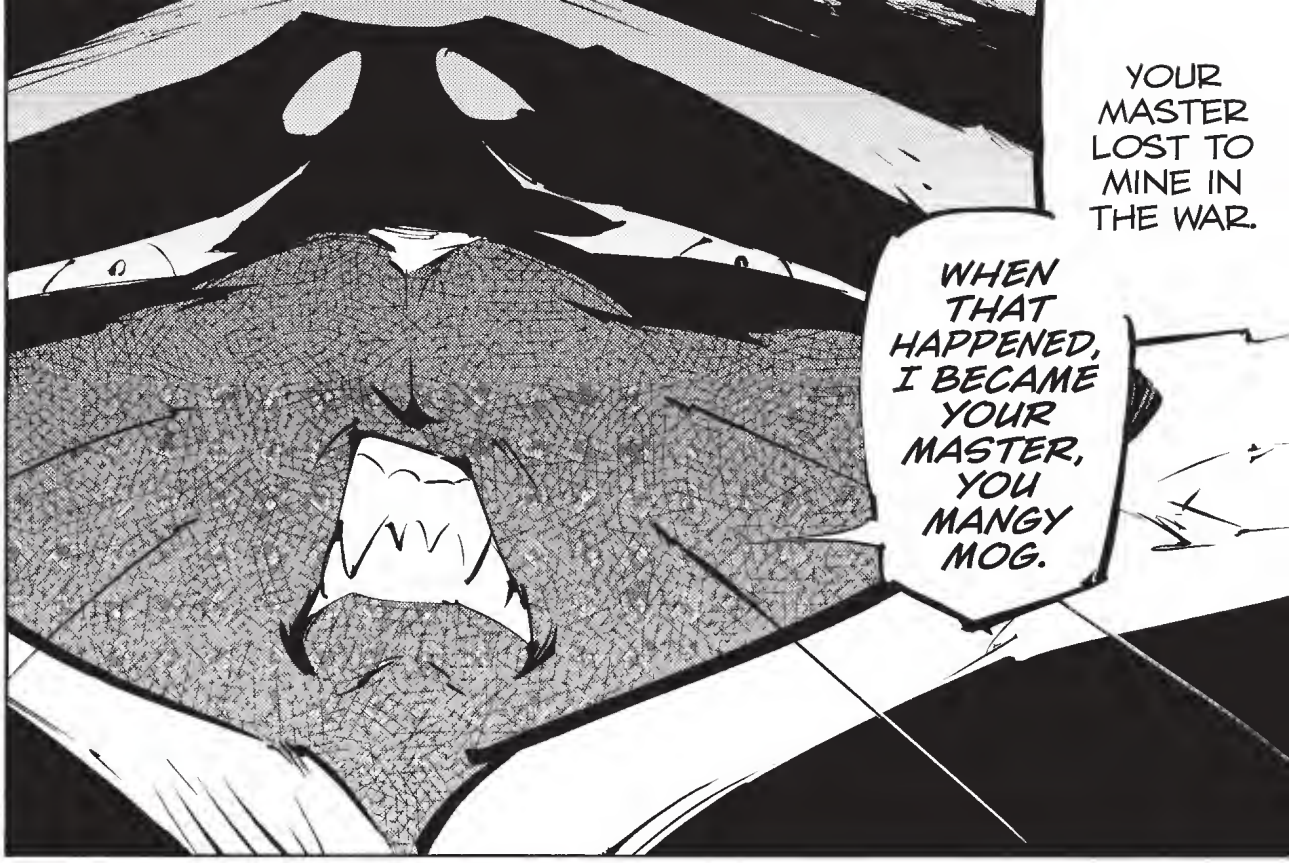
WELL, WELL. I WONDERED WHY YOU HADN'T COME TO SEE ME. SO HERE YOU ARE.
ZSH

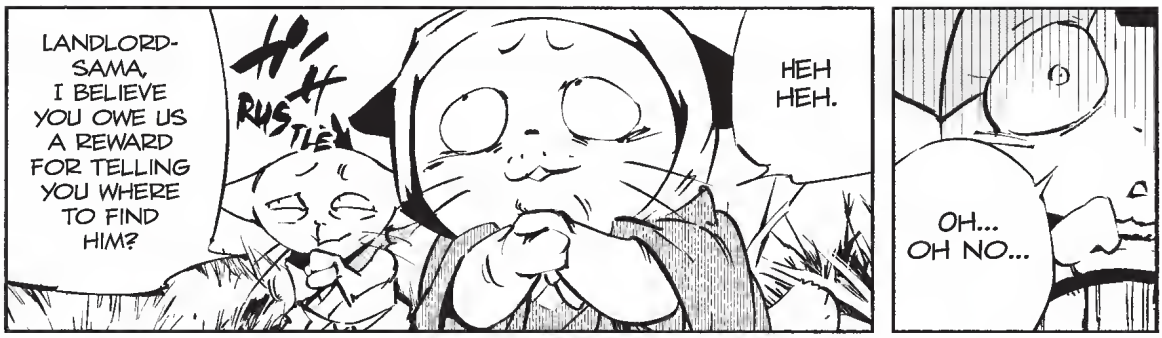

BUT NO MATTER. I HAD BUSINESS AT THIS TEAHOUSE ANYWAY.
YOU WEARY ME, FORCING ME TO JOURNEY ALL THE WAY TO THIS RIDGE.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

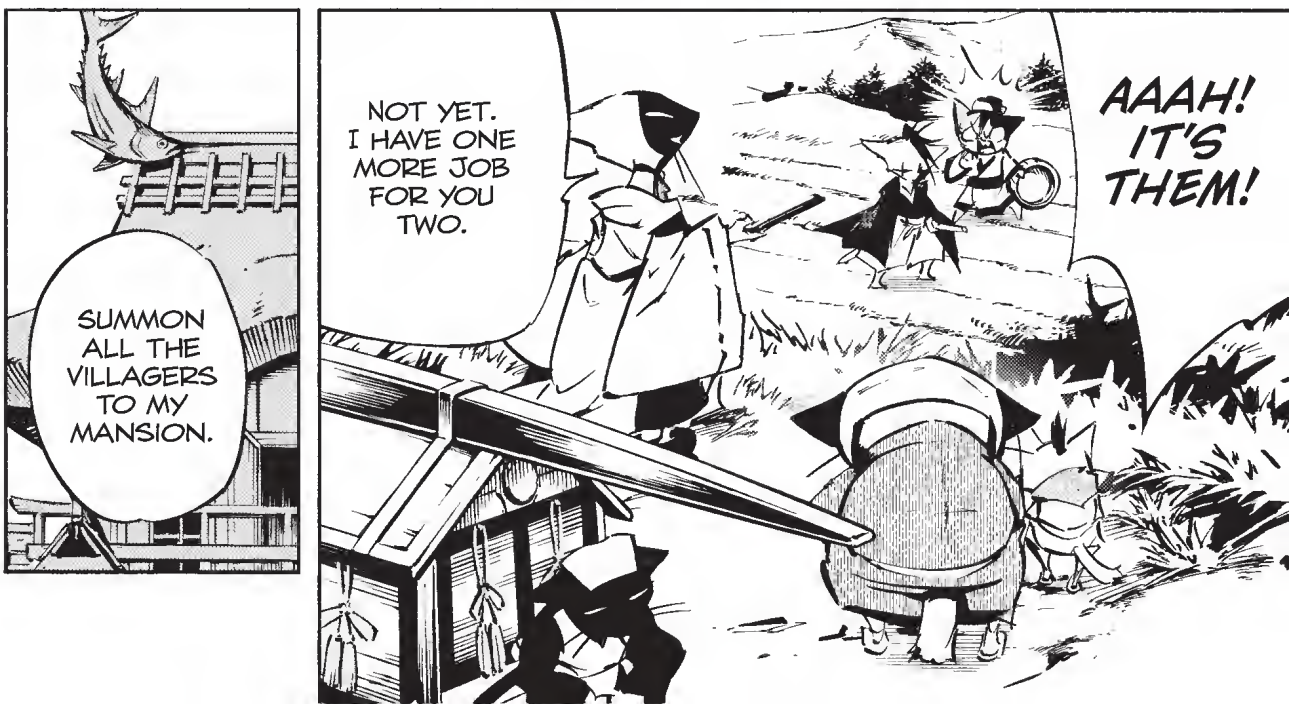
MY, MY.
WHERE DID YOU FAIL TO UNDER-STAND ME, NORACHIYO-SAN?


I BELIEVE I ALREADY GAVE YOU MY ANSWER.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SERVING PEOPLE EVER AGAIN, SIAMECHIKA.
...WHAT?


OH, MEOW! LAND-LORD-SAMA?!
...I SEE.
SO YOU ARE THE LAND-LORD.
I ♥ FLAP

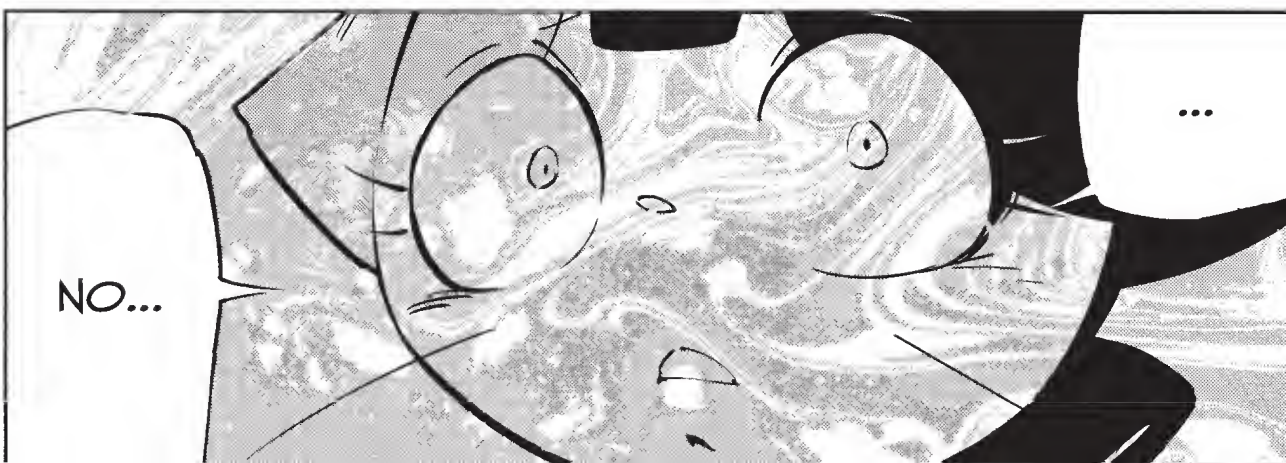

YOUR MASTER LOST TO MINE IN THE WAR.
WHEN THAT HAPPENED, I BECAME YOUR MASTER, YOU MANGY MOG.

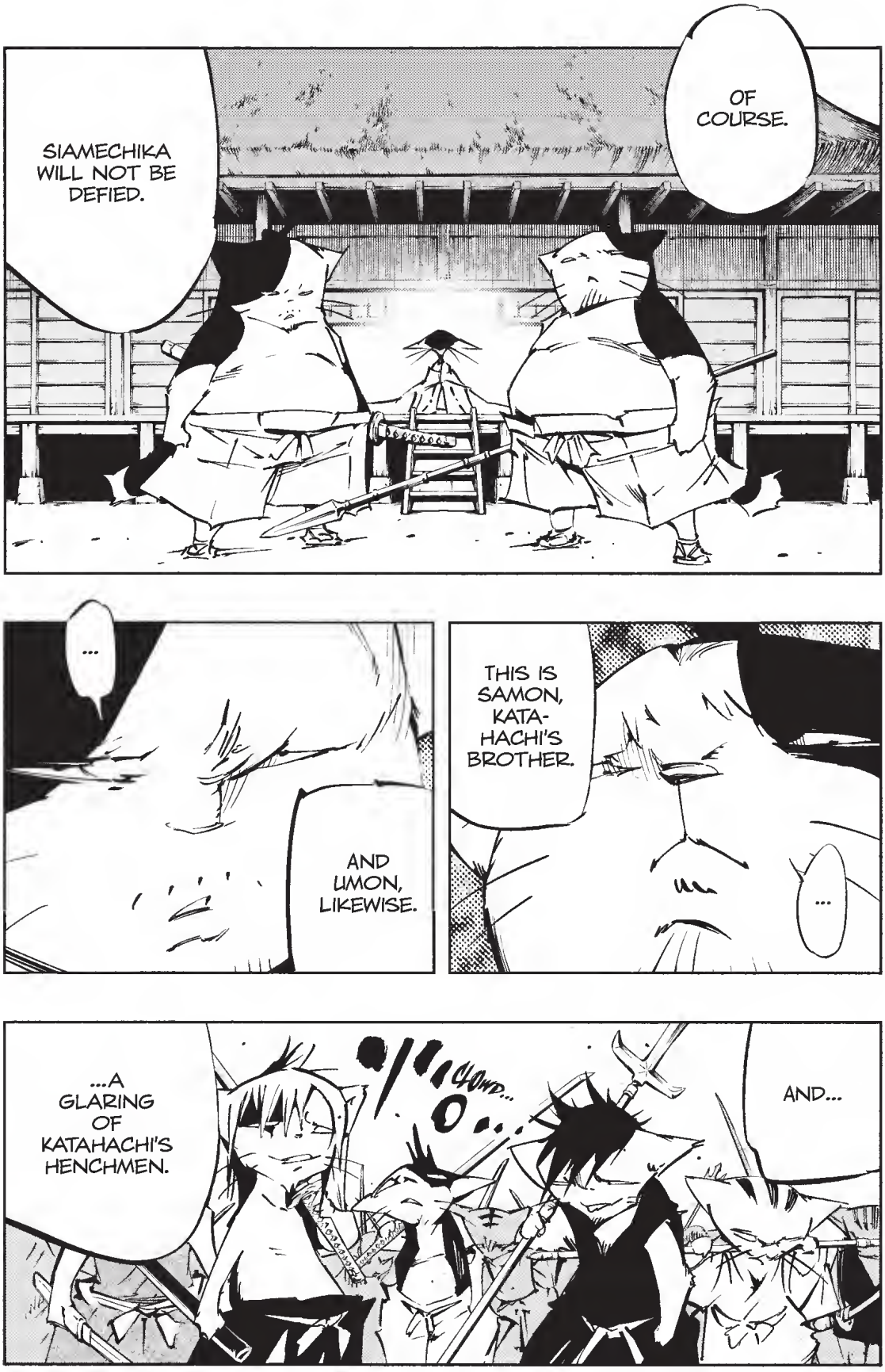

LANDLORD-SAMA, I BELIEVE YOU OWE US A REWARD FOR TELLING YOU WHERE TO FIND HIM?
RUSTLE
HEH HEH.
OH... OH NO...


SUMMON ALL THE VILLAGERS TO MY MANSION.
NOT YET. I HAVE ONE MORE JOB FOR YOU TWO.
AAAH! IT'S THEM!

AN EXAMPLE MUST BE MADE.
BAM
CLAMOR
CLAMOR
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
BUZZ
BUZZ

THE MANGY MOG IS GOING TO KILL THE KITTEN.


NO...
...

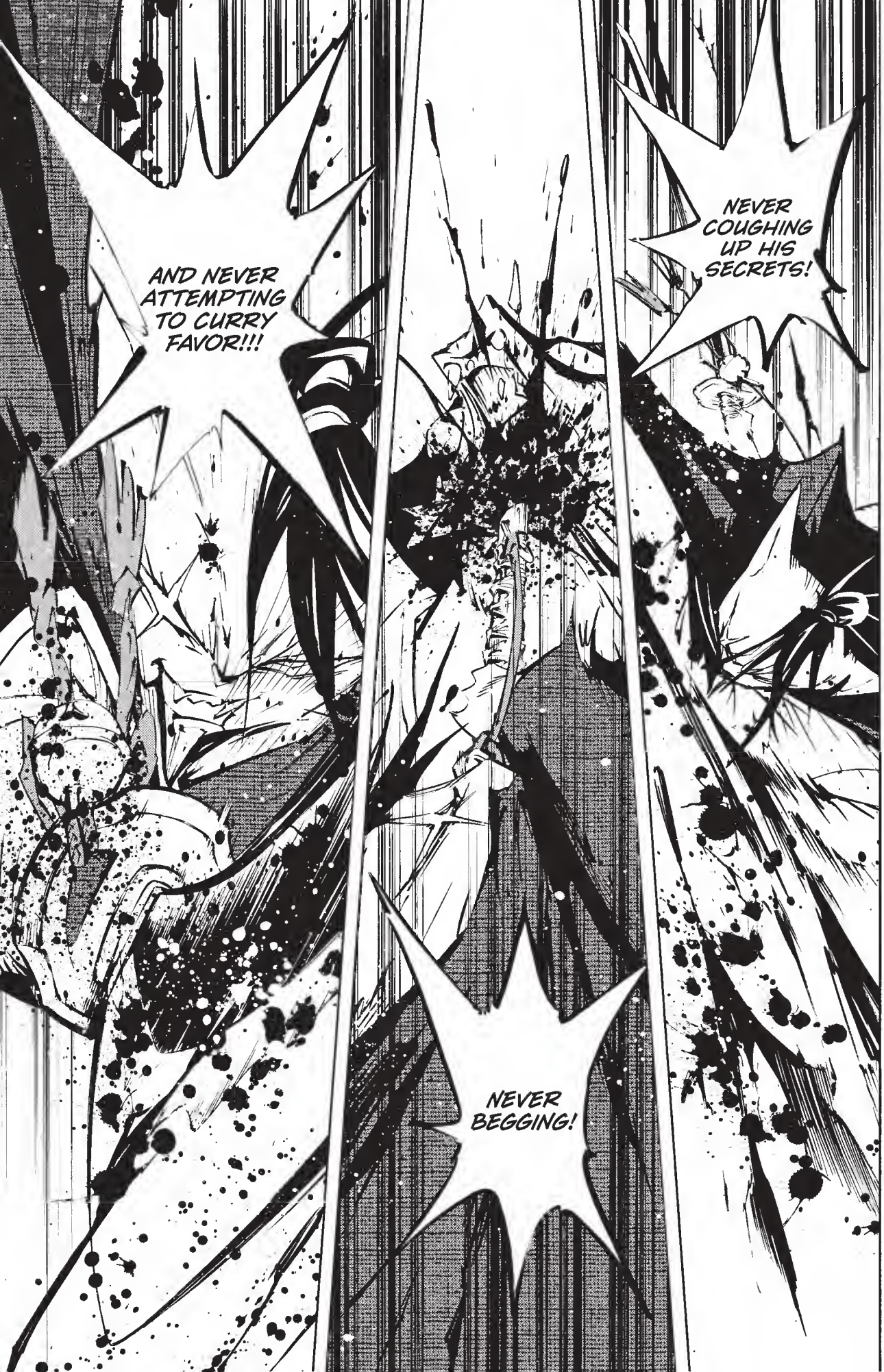

SIAMECHIKA WILL NOT BE DEFIED.
OF COURSE.
...
AND UMON, LIKEWISE.
THIS IS SAMON, KATA-HACHI'S BROTHER.
...
...A GLARING OF KATAHACHI'S HENCHMEN.
CLOMP...
AND...

THEY HAVE ALL COME HERE TO CUT YOU TO PIECES.
NORA-CHIYO.
NONE OF THIS CLOWDER IS WILLING TO RISK HIS LIFE TO CHALLENGE ME.
DON'T BE A FOOL.
IF I'M GOING TO DIE ANYWAY, I WOULDN'T MIND IF YOU WERE THE ONE TO...
...UM...
YOU HAVE NO REASON TO FIGHT THEM, DO YOU?
...OMIKE.
POOR OMIKE-CHAN. ALL BECAUSE HE HAD TO GO TO HER TEAHOUSE.
HE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY.
...OH MEOW...HE'S DOOMED. THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN WIN THIS.

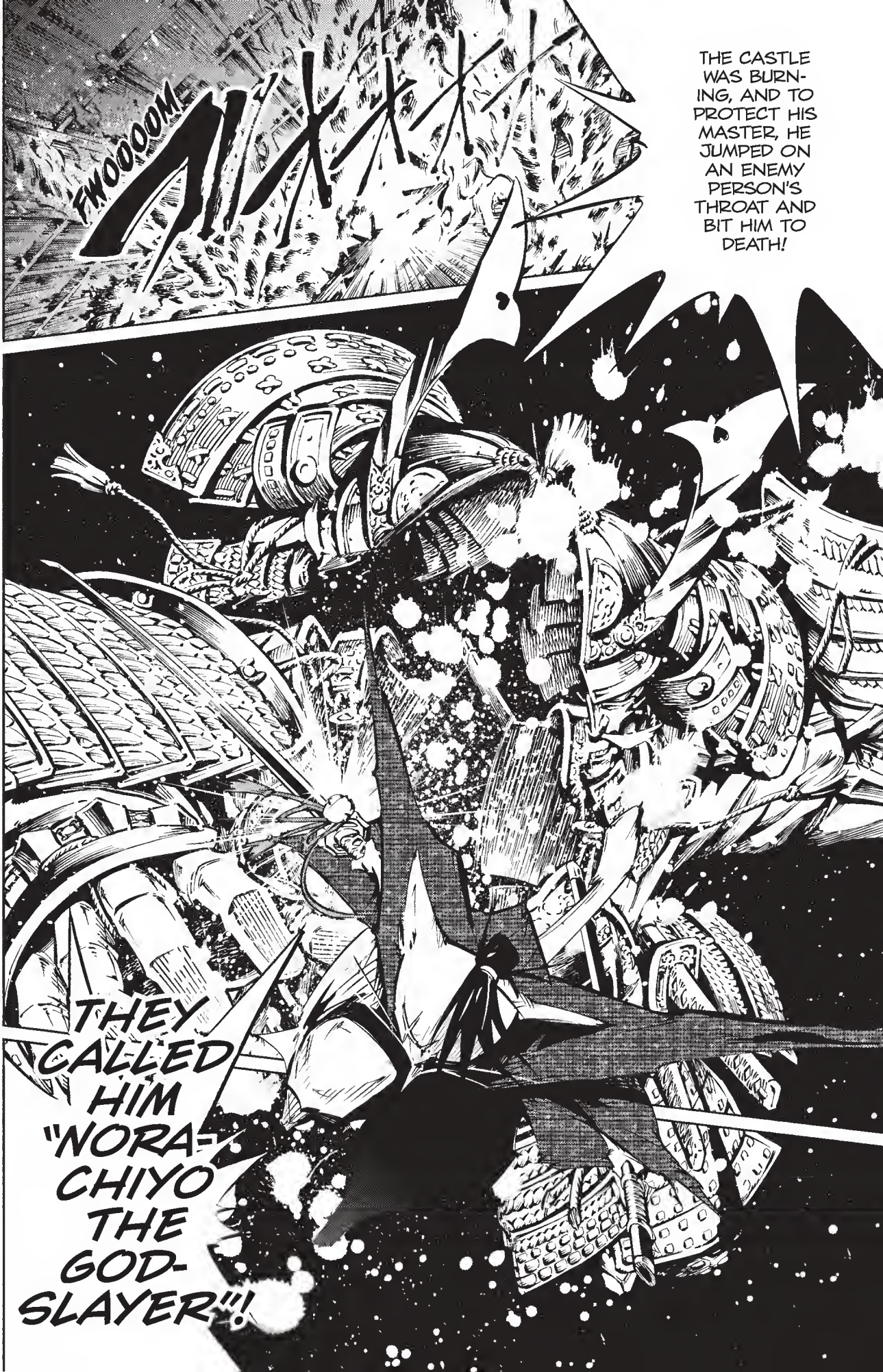
THE WHOLE LOT OF THEM FLOCKED HERE TO GET AT YOUR PERSON'S MONEY.
THOSE WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A STRAY ...
...CAN-NOT SLAY ME.

WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH! YOU'RE A KEPT CAT YOURSELF!
IN THIS WORLD, PEOPLE ARE GODS!
...HEH HEH.
WHAT?! BUT!!
CLANG
AN INFIDEL WHO KNOWS NO FEAR OF THE GODS DESERVES TO DIE!!!
...MY MAS-TER TOLD ME...
CONCEIT IS WHAT MAKES A CAT A CAT.

SLASH
RRR-ROWR!
HOW DARE YOU?!
TO HAVE CONCEIT IS TO HAVE A TRUE SOUL, FREE OF GUILE.
HE CUT HIM IN TWO!!!
HE'S... SMILING?!


AND NEVER ATTEMPTING TO CURRY FAVOR!!!
NEVER COUGHING UP HIS SECRETS!
NEVER BEGGING!

ROWR?! HE'S PARTING A SEA OF CATS!!!
THAT...! THAT REMINDS ME, I ONCE HEARD TELL...
...OF A LEGENDARY CAT WHO WAS IN ŌMEOW PROVINCE DURING THE WAR!
THAT IS WHAT MAKES A CAT BEAUTI-FUL!
KAPOW
POW
POW
A CAT CARVES HIS OWN PATH, AND EARNESTLY CONTINUES TO FOLLOW IT!


FWOOOOM
THE CASTLE WAS BURNING, AND TO PROTECT HIS MASTER, HE JUMPED ON AN ENEMY PERSON'S THROAT AND BIT HIM TO DEATH!
THEY CALLED HIM "NORACHIYO THE GODSLAYER"!

CRUSH THAT PIP-SQUEAK WITH THE WEIGHT OF YOUR ENORMOUS GIRTHS!
WHOOM
MROWR! I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS NON-SENSE!
YOU VILLAGE RUFFIANS ARE USELESS TO ME!!
GO, SAMON!! UMON!!!

KA-KING
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
THE L&R BROTHERS!
HE BLOCKED IT!
THE TWO ATTACK AS ONE!!!
NO, NOT YET!

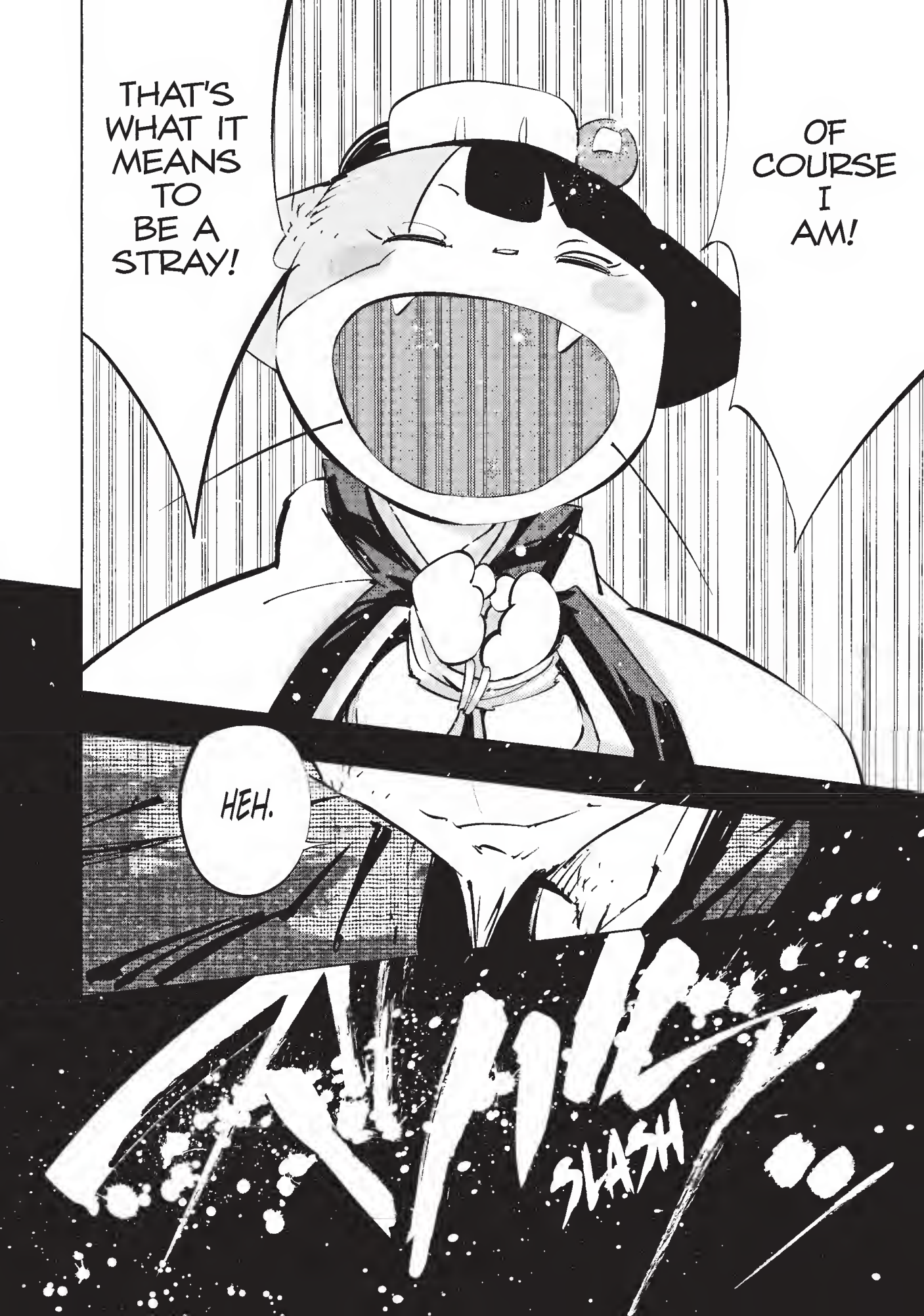
ARE YOU PROUD OF YOUR PATH, BIG GUY?
...SO WHAT OF YOU?
QUIT PHILOSOPHIZING AND LET ME CRUSH YOU, LITTLE TOM!
SH...! SHUT UP!!!
IF IDEALS COULD FILL OUR BELLIES, NO ONE WOULD GO HUNGRY!!!
IDEALS ARE RISŌ— OUR LOVE (SŌ) FOR NATURE (RI).
GRRNG
...ANOTHER THING MY MASTER TOLD ME—
SHOULD YOU DIE BEFORE YOU REACH THE END OF YOUR PATH, IF THAT PATH WAS ONE YOU CAN TAKE PRIDE IN, YOU WILL HAVE NOTHING TO REGRET.
GRRNG
GRRN

NGH...
GU-
HAH...?!
...

SIAME-
CHIKA.
DO YOU
INTEND TO
CONTINUE
THIS
QUARREL?

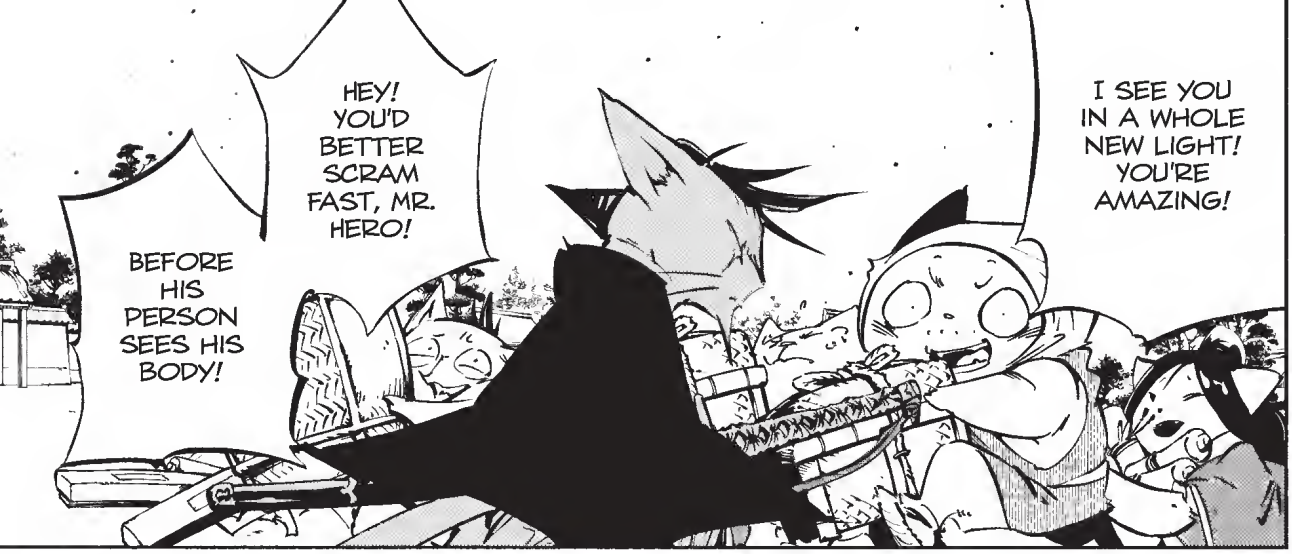
NATURE
IS THE
PHYSICAL
WORLD.
NOTHING
IS MORE
NATURAL.

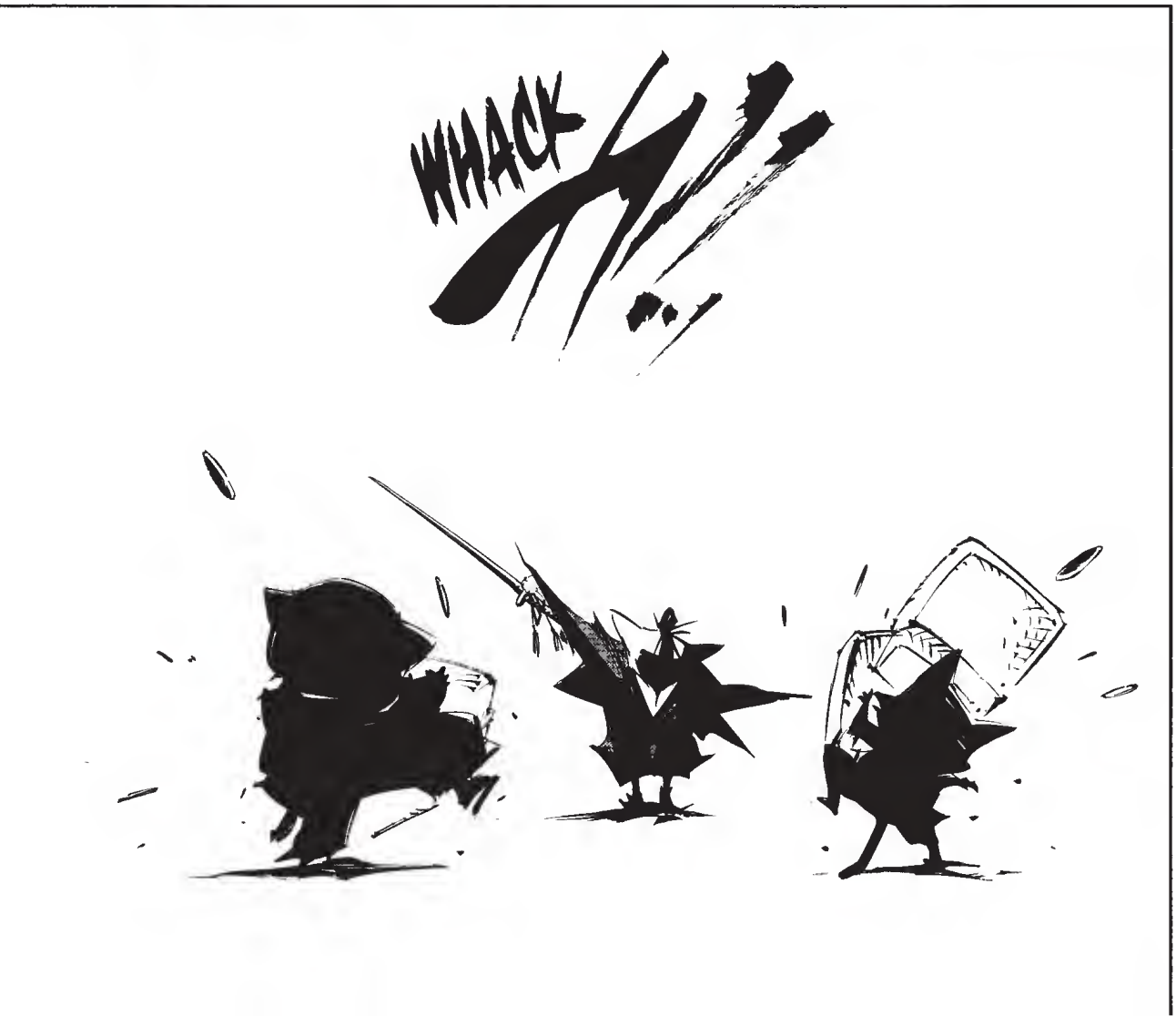
IF YOU KILL ME, MY PERSON'S DIVINE PUNISHMENT WILL STRIKE YOU AND THIS KITTEN!
YOU CAN'T KILL ME!
D...DAMN YOU!
DON'T YOU TALK DOWN TO ME!
EEK!
LUNGE
...OMIKE.
THE FACT IS, DEATH MAY BE EASIER THAN LIVING IN THIS WORLD.
BUT I MUST ASK— ARE YOU READY TO BE FREE?
...
WHAAA ?!
...! NORA-CHIYO-SAMA...

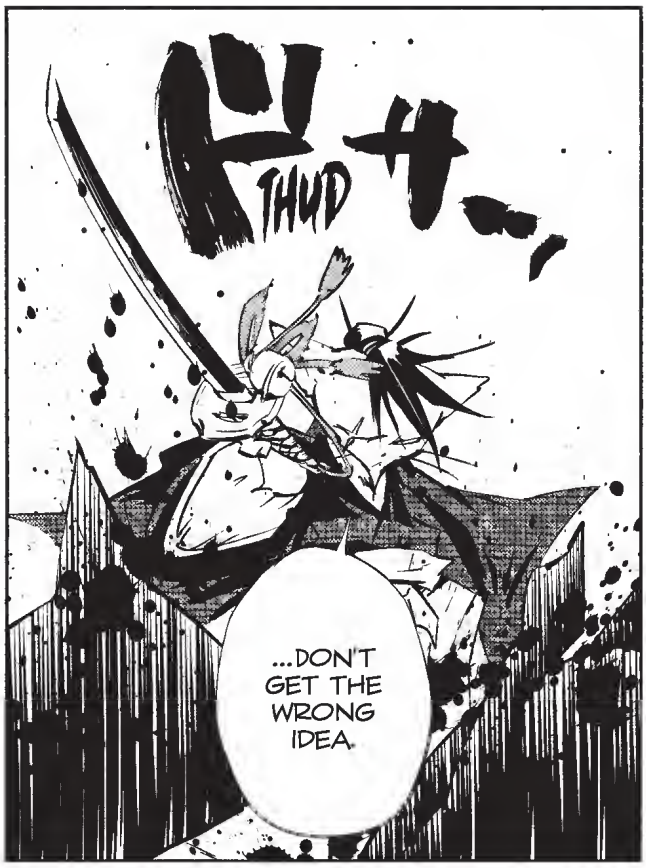

THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A STRAY!
OF COURSE I AM!
HEH.
SLASH

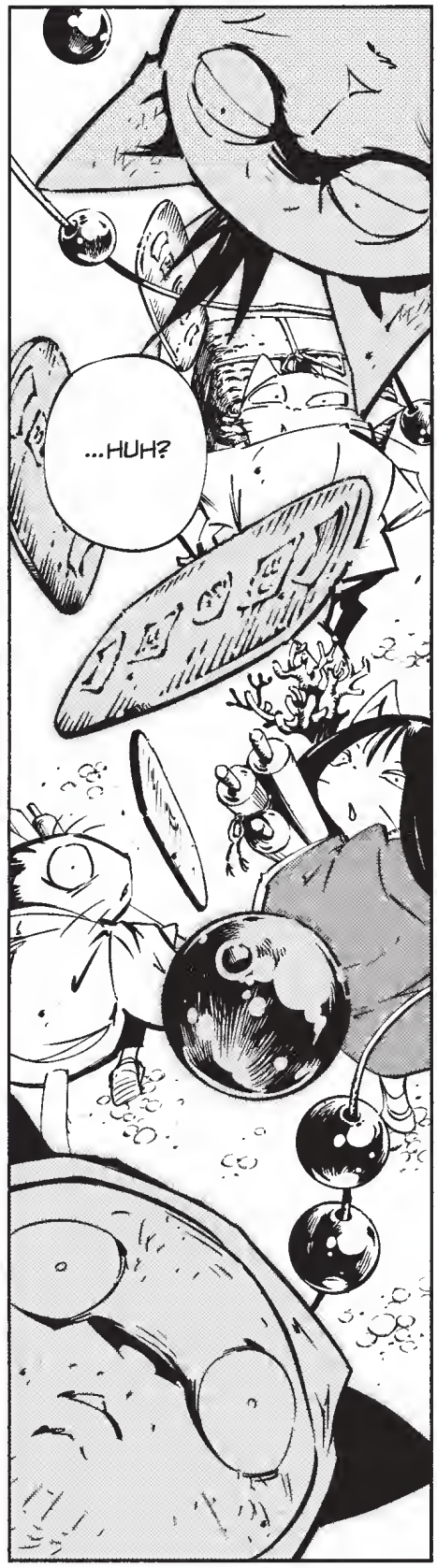
HE...! HE KILLED A KEPT CAT!!!
WHOA...
...WH–

HE DID IT!
WAHAH
THE LAND-LORD IS DEAD! WE'RE FINALLY FREE!!!
LOOK AT ALL THIS TREA-SURE!
TAKE IT! TAKE IT ALL! IT ALL CAME FROM OUR TAXES ANYWAY!
ME-YOOOW!
DIE!
STOMP
WHACK
BOFF
WAH HA HA! SERVES YOU RIGHT, LOUSY LANDLORD!

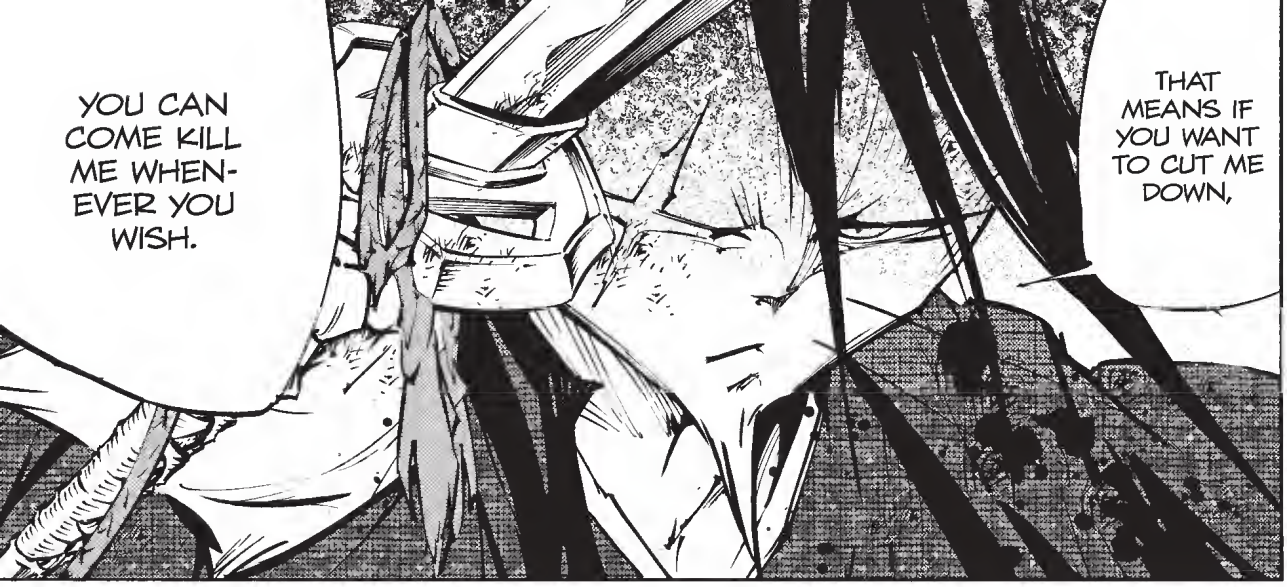

BEFORE HIS PERSON SEES HIS BODY!
HEY! YOU'D BETTER SCRAM FAST, MR. HERO!
I SEE YOU IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT! YOU'RE AMAZING!


WHACK


THUD
...DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA.


...HUH?

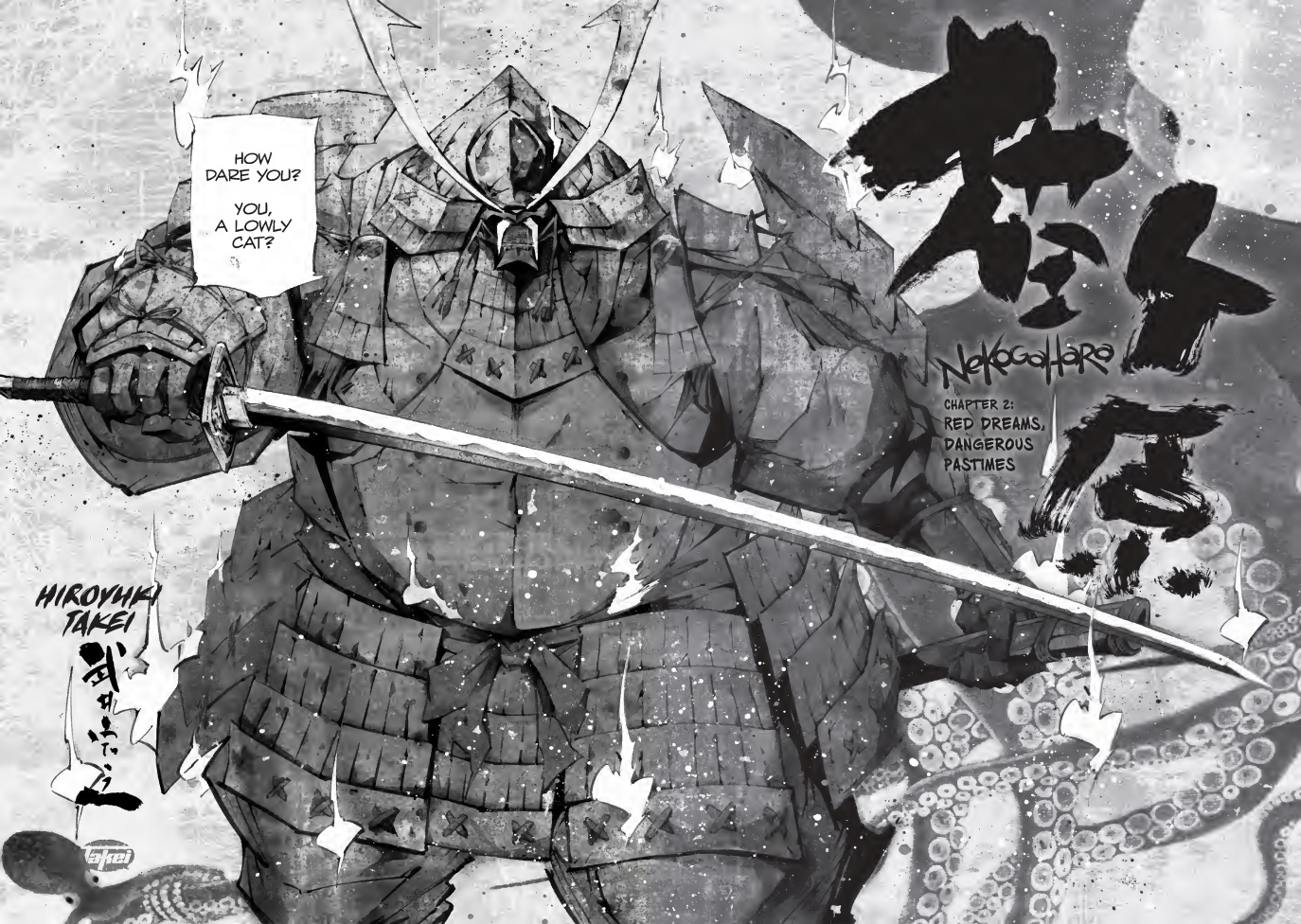
I DON'T REMEMBER DOING ANY FAVORS FOR ANYONE.
IF YOU WANT TREASURE, YOU CAN WIN IT WITH YOUR OWN HANDS.
...


YOU CAN COME KILL ME WHEN-EVER YOU WISH.
THAT MEANS IF YOU WANT TO CUT ME DOWN,

A PRRRAYER FOR YOUR SOULS.
ALING

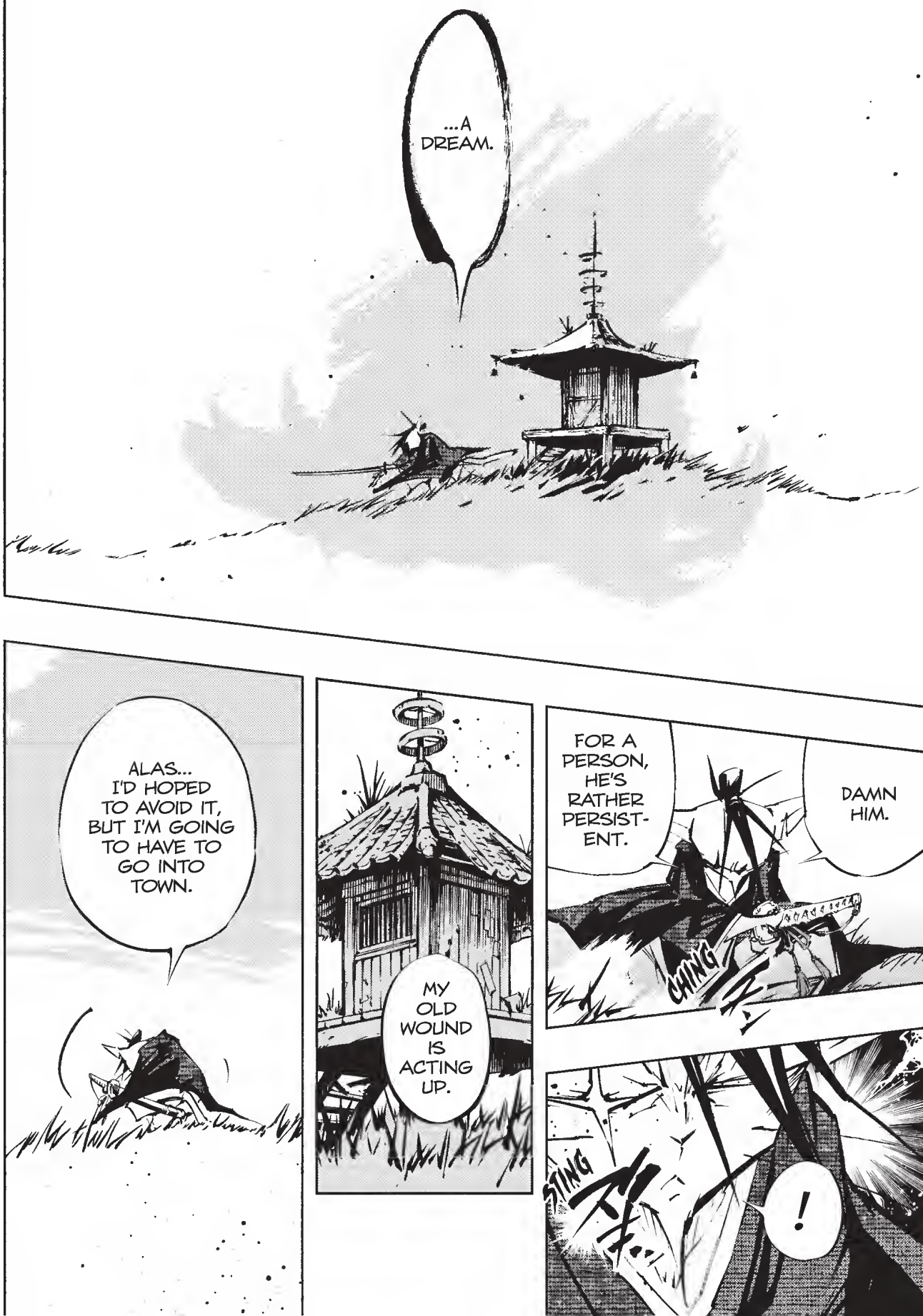
ネコガハラ
NekogaHara

HOW DARE YOU?
YOU, A LOWLY CAT?
CLANK

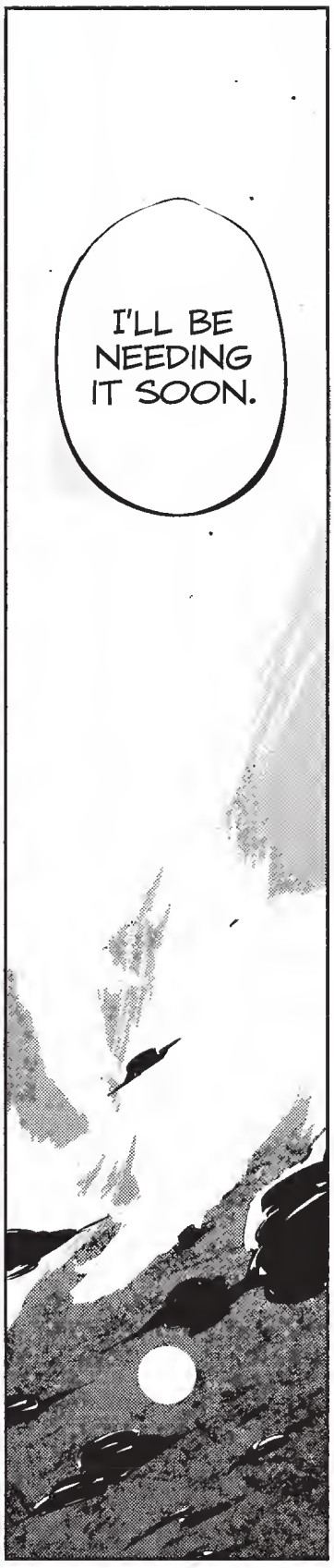

HOW DARE YOU?
YOU, A LOWLY CAT?
NEKOGAHARA
CHAPTER 2:
RED DREAMS, DANGEROUS PASTIMES
HIROYUKI TAKEI

ネコガハラ
NekogaHara

JOLT
HFF
HFF
HFF
HFF


...A DREAM.
ALAS... I'D HOPED TO AVOID IT, BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GO INTO TOWN.
MY OLD WOUND IS ACTING UP.
FOR A PERSON, HE'S RATHER PERSIST-ENT.
DAMN HIM.
CHING
STING
!

BUZZ
BUZZ
CLAMOR
CLAMOR


I'LL BE NEEDING IT SOON.

BUZZ
BUZZ
MUR-
MUR
MUR-
MUR
I MUST FINISH THIS QUICKLY ...
I DISLIKE LARGE CROWDS.
SWOON
...
!
BUMP

WHOA THERE!
WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, POPS?!
DON'T TELL ME YOU KNEW I WAS COMING, AND NOW YOU'RE TRYIN' TO PICK A FIGHT! ARE YA?!
ZSH

ME, THE MIGHTY AMEMURA SHORT-SAMA?!
TRYIN' TO PICK A FIGHT WITH THE TOM BORN WITH THESE SPIRAL-SHAPED CRESTS ON HIS SHOULDERS ?!!
BA-BAM

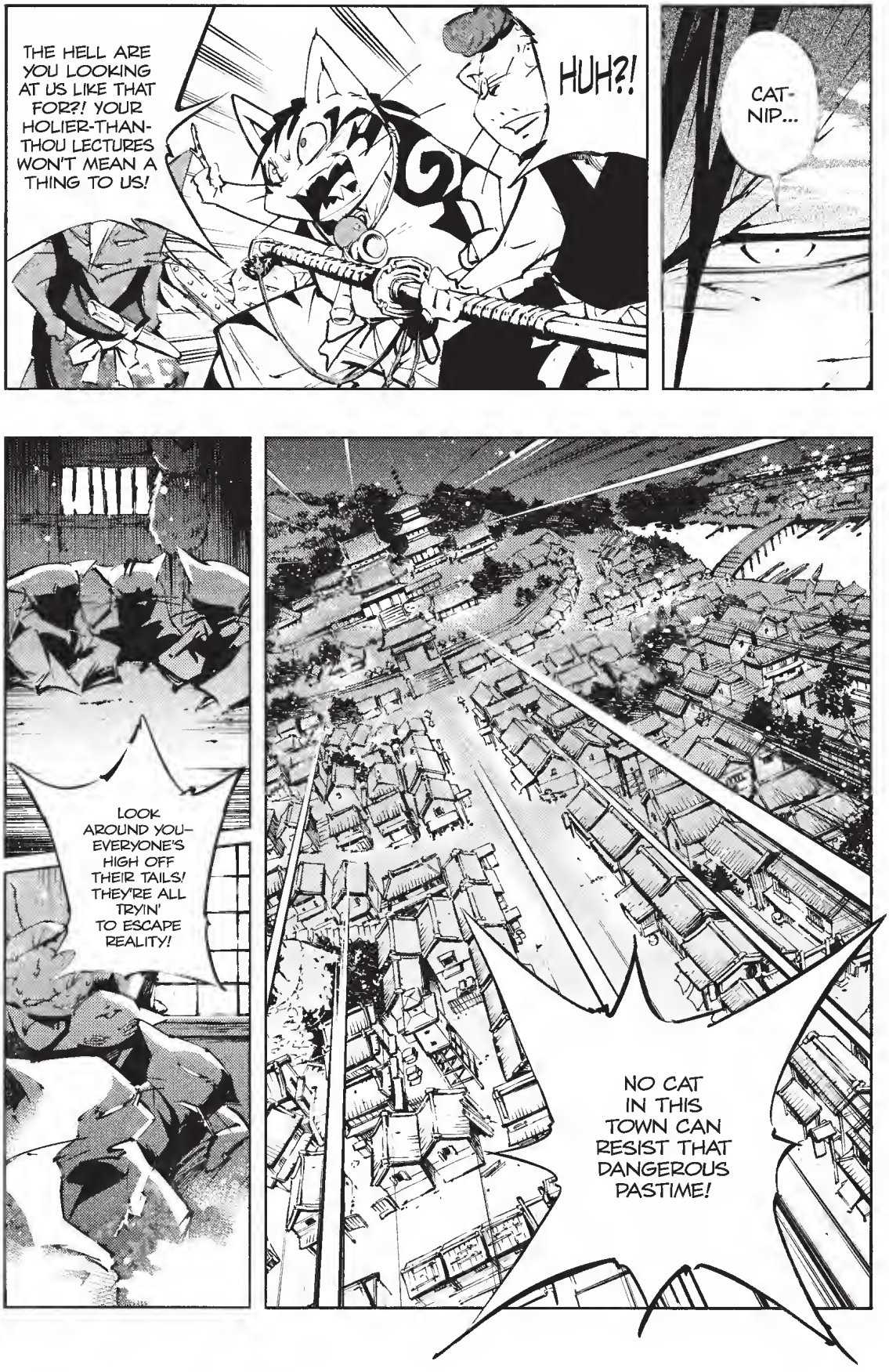
DID YOU SAY RIKAN-SAMA? THE ONE KEPT BY THE IN-COMPARABLE SHAKEGAWA ?!
CLAMOR
CLAMOR
...
CLAMOR
CLAMOR
ISN'T THAT AMEMURA RICAN-SAMA'S DEADBEAT SON?
MEOWCH. HE SURE CAUGHT THE WRONG TOM'S ATTENTION.

THIS IS WHY I HATE GOING INTO TOWN... LISTEN, KITTIES. TAKE MY ADVICE AND GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE YOU GET HURT.
...TCH.

BAM
AND IT'S GOT A BELL! WE COULD MAKE A KILLING SELLING THIS!
WHOA, WHAT THE-! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, SHORT-SAN! THIS IS A REAL KATANA!

MRRGH.
TO THINK THEY COULD TAKE IT WITHOUT MY NOTICING. MY SYMPTOMS ARE GROWING WORSE.
IT'S GONE.
...
KZH
ALL RIGHT, THEN. RETURN MY KATANA NOW...
...AND I'LL LET YOU LIVE, YOU DOG-EARED MOGGIES.
!?
PAZH

FSH—
I'M GONNA SELL IT, AND TURN IT INTO THIS!
AMAZING CATNIP! PASSPORT TO DREAM-LAND!!
BAM
THE GREATEST OF THIS WORLD'S DANGEROUS PASTIMES !!!
WHA?!
YOU'RE UN-ARMED AND NOW YOU'RE GIVING ME ATTITUDE? YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YA, POPS!
FIRST OF ALL, THERE AIN'T NO WAY YOU'RE GETTIN' YOUR SWORD BACK!
NYA HA HA HA
JRR...

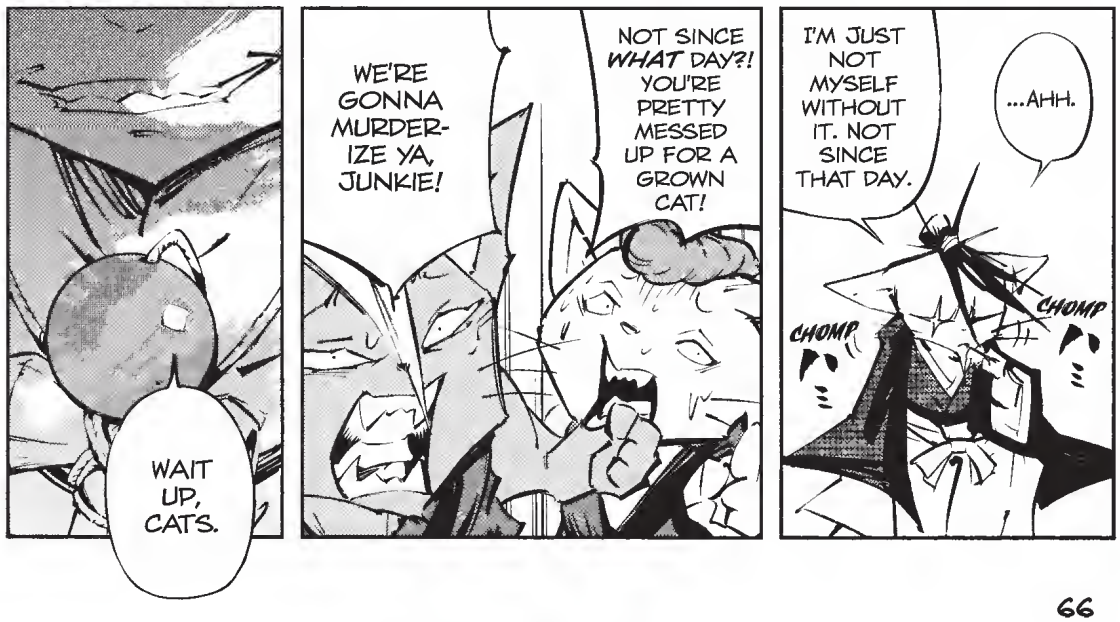

THE HELL ARE YOU LOOKING AT US LIKE THAT FOR?! YOUR HOLIER-THAN-THOU LECTURES WON'T MEAN A THING TO US!
HUH?!
CAT-NIP...
LOOK AROUND YOU— EVERYONE'S HIGH OFF THEIR TAILS! THEY'RE ALL TRYIN' TO ESCAPE REALITY!
NO CAT IN THIS TOWN CAN RESIST THAT DANGEROUS PASTIME!

BAM
AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO MY OLD MAN'S IRON PAW!
WHETHER HE MEANT TO OR NOT, HE'S TAKEN ALL THEIR MOTIVATION AND MADE THEM HIS SLAVES!
...DOG-GONE IT!
NO CAT IN THIS WHOLE TOWN CAN KNOCK ME.

SO I'M GONNA SURPASS MY OLD MAN AND RULE AS CATNIP KING!
CATNIP
PA-POW!
YO! BOSS!
THACK
DANGEROUS PASTIME, EH? ALL THE MORE REASON TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM YOU MISERABLE MOGGIES.
HEH.
MUR-MUR
MÜR-MUR

UH!
SNA
ICH
THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR.
CHOMP
AND JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM A FAT CAT'S GOOD-FOR-NOTHING SON. THIS IS QUALITY STUFF.

SHOCK
YOU'RE A USER?!


WAIT UP, CATS.
WE'RE GONNA MURDER-IZE YA, JUNKIE!
NOT SINCE WHAT DAY?! YOU'RE PRETTY MESSED UP FOR A GROWN CAT!
I'M JUST NOT MYSELF WITHOUT IT. NOT SINCE THAT DAY.
...AHH.
CHOMP
CHOMP

CLANG
CHAK
THE MESSED UP OLD TOM IS MINE.
I'LL KILL HIM WITH HIS OWN SWORD!
SHA-KING
I WOULDN'T.
I'M SEEING MORE CLEARLY NOW. I FEEL MUCH BETTER— THANKS TO YOU.

RED WARRIOR.
BUT IF YOU INSIST, I'LL CHEW YOU TO PIECES, SO YOU CAN NEVER STAND IN MY WAY AGAIN.
WHAP

SHOCK
OH, SCAT! HE'S ALREADY TRIPPIN'!
RED WARRIOR ?!
HE'S GONNA BE TROUBLE! GET HIM!
?!
POUNCE
...MY MASTER TOLD ME...
HE JUMPED!

I AIN'T GOING EASY ON HIM, EVEN IF HE IS AN UNARMED JUNKIE!
I'M THE TOM THAT WILL BE CATNIP KING!
THE CRAZY OLD-!
HE'S COMING STRAIGHT FOR ME?!!
PAWS DON'T MOVE WITHOUT A HEAD.
DEFEAT THE HEAD, AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW.
THACK
MEOWHA?!!
THE SWORD'S TOO LONG! I CAN'T PULL IT OUT!!

!
THIMP
THIS BLADE WAS BEQUEATHED TO ME BY MY MASTER. IT IS A PART OF ME–MY WEAPON...
YOUR FIRST MISTAKE WAS TO THINK YOU COULD USE ANOTHER CAT'S WEAPON IN PLACE OF YOUR OWN.
KO-TATSU.

I WOULD NOT WISH TO TRADE THOSE DAYS OF PEACE FOR ANYTHING.
...
WHAT ...?
IT IS TOO LATE FOR APOLO-GIES.
WHEN IT IS DRAWN, THE END IS NEAR. IT WILL NOT RETURN TO ITS SHEATH UNTIL IT HAS SPILLED BLOOD.

YOU MANGY–!!!
...YOU TOOK EVERY-THING FROM ME!!!
BUT YOU...!

SLASH
SLASH
SLASH

SLAASH

DU-DUN
A PRRRAYER FOR YOUR SOULS.
PEH
CLACK
WHA...
WHO ARE THESE CATS? I THOUGHT IT WAS THE RED WARRIOR.
HM...?

ネコガハラ
NekogaHara

...SAY IT AIN'T SO.
MAKI-SUKE...
TORIZŌ...
HOW CAN YOU ALL BE DEAD ?!!!

Nekogahara

CHAPTER 3:
POMPEY SASS

HIROYUKI TAKEI

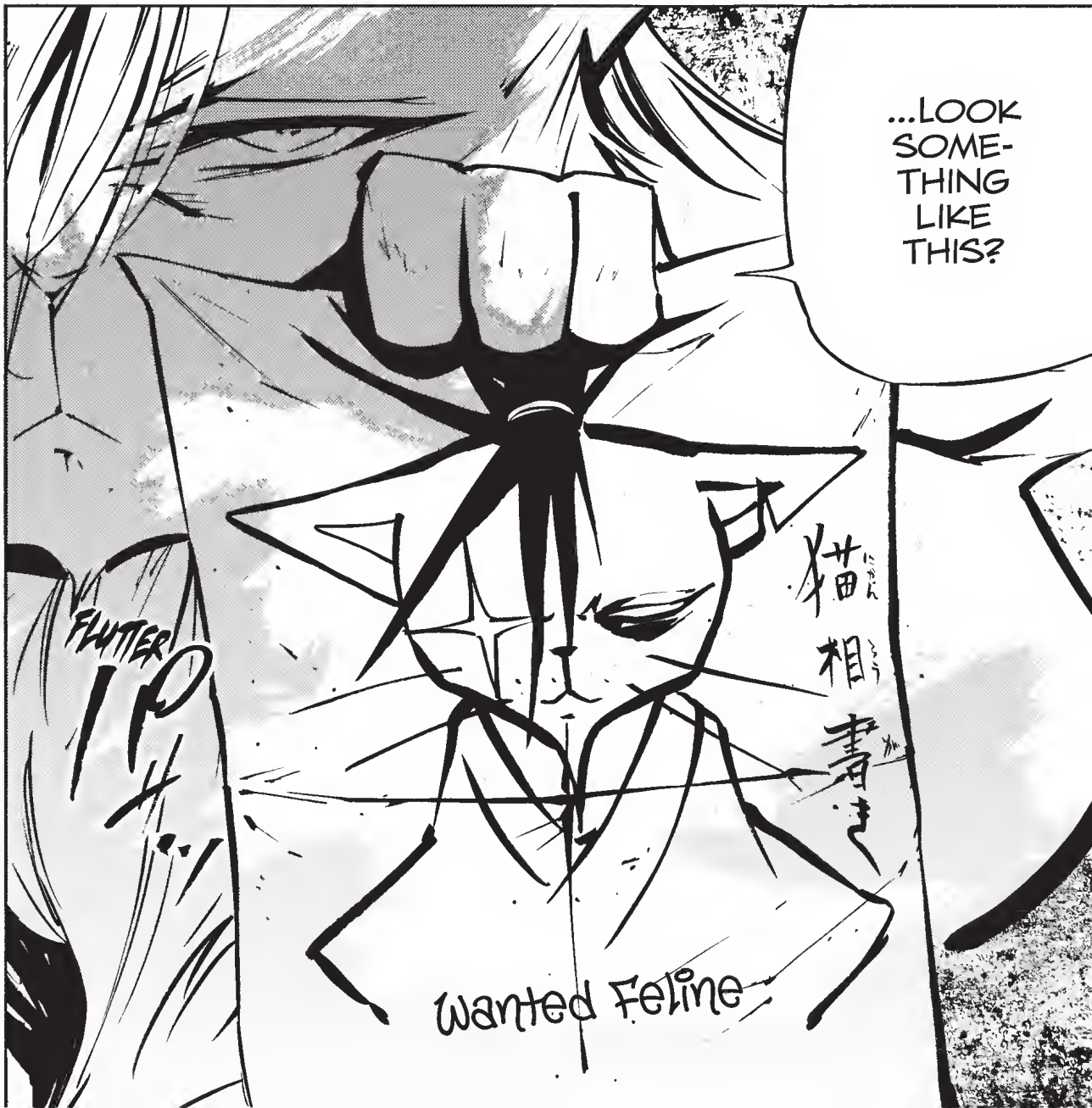
SHISHI-WAKA?
...?
EEEK! ♡
SHISHI-WAKA-SAMAAA! ♡
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
NGH!
URGH!
ARGH!
GRK!
...BEAUTIFUL SWORDS-FELINE... OF JUSTICE...?
YOU MEAN YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF SHISHI-WAKA? WHAT A LOSER!
SHISHIWAKA-SAMA
HUH? WHY WOULD ANYBODY CARE WHO YOU ARE?!
ARGH, DOGGONE IT! WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?!!!
SHISHIWAKA-SAMA IS TOUR-ING THE PROVINCES, SLAYING EVIL WHEREVER HE GOES! A BEAUTIFUL SWORDSFELINE OF JUSTICE!

TWANG
シャン
I AM INDEED THE ONE KNOWN AS NORWE SHISHI-WAKA.
I BEG YOUR PARDON, YOUNG TOM.

I'M AMEMURA SHORT...
...AME-MURA.
SHISHI SHE-CATS?

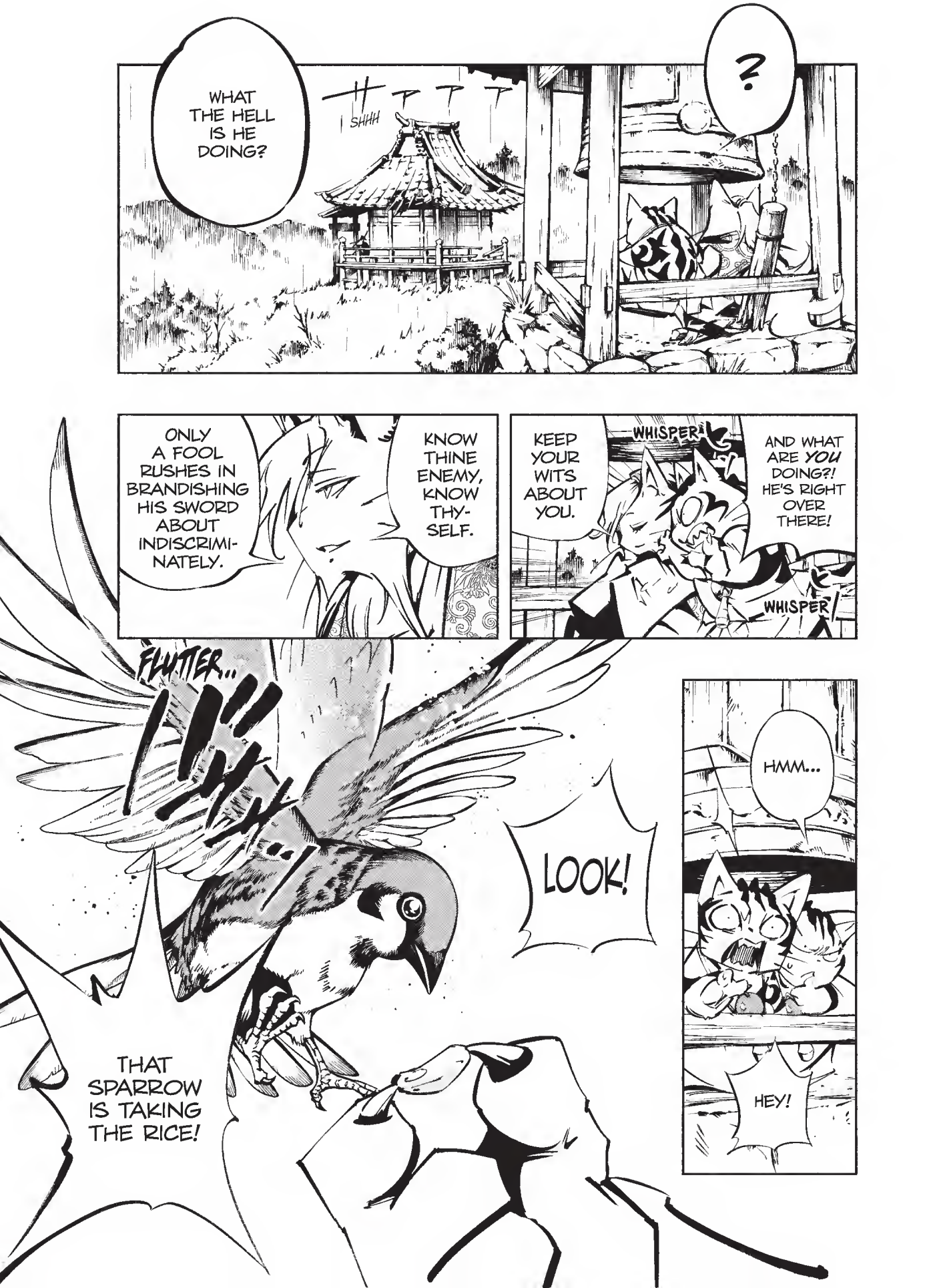
ALLOW ME TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE DISCOURTESY SHOWN TO YOU BY THESE SHISHI SHE-CATS.

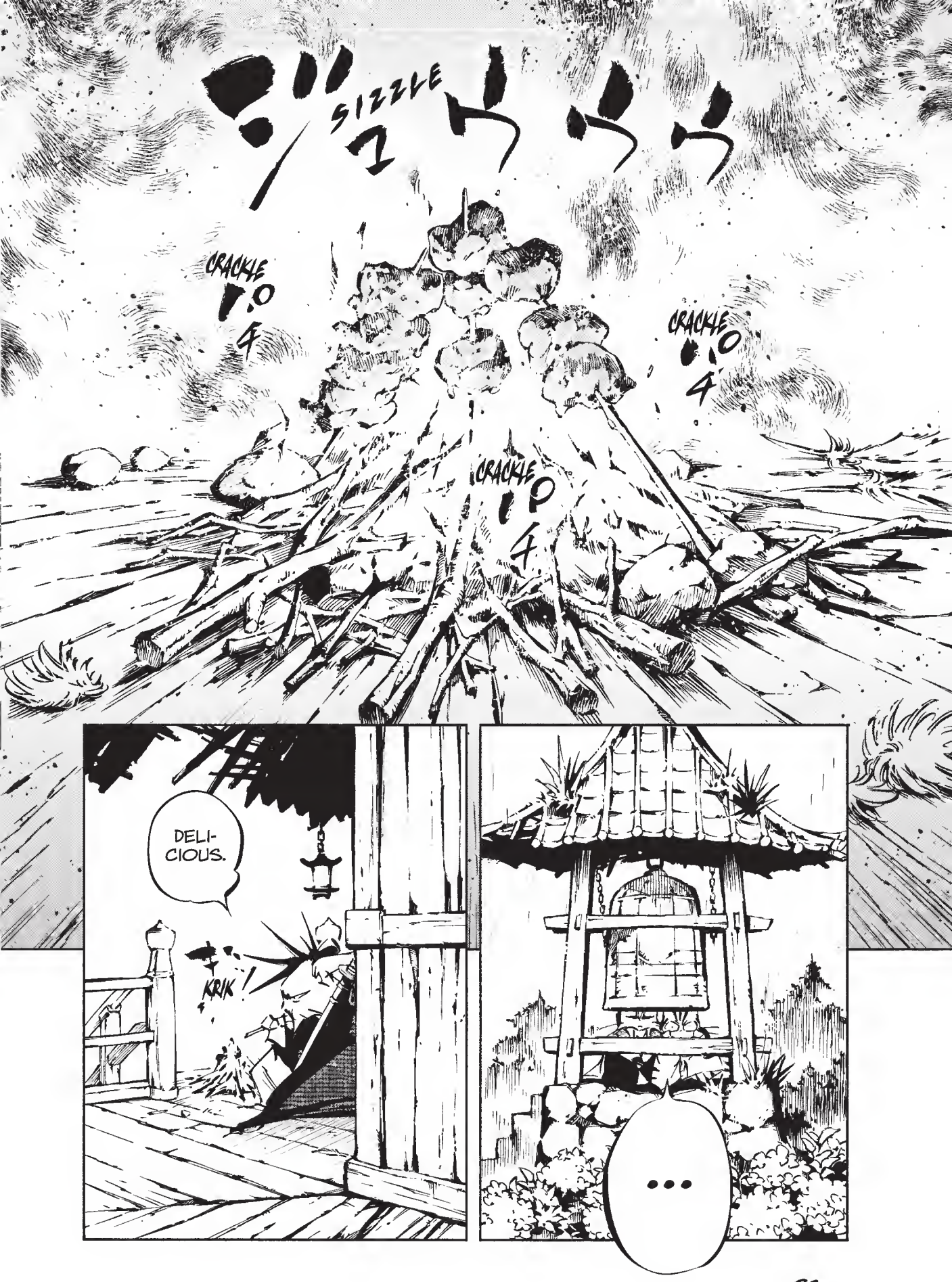
AND DID HE, PER-CHANCE ...
RUSTLE
DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?
SQUEEEEE
VERY WELL, SHORT. NOW THAT WE'VE BEEN INTRO-DUCED, I WISH TO KNOW THE NAME OF THAT VILLAIN.
THIS IS AWKWARD.
HE CALLED HIM BY NAME!
THEY'RE SO CLOSE!


...LOOK SOME-THING LIKE THIS?
FLUTTER
猫相書き
Wanted Feline

SHHHHH
SHELTER...
TO BE FOUND IN GREAT MEASURE.
FEATHERED CREATURES.
VERDURE.

...I AM HUNGRY.
GRUMBLE
WELL...ALL I NEED IS A SINGLE GRAIN OF RICE.
KSHIK


WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING?
SHHH
?
ONLY A FOOL RUSHES IN BRANDISHING HIS SWORD ABOUT INDISCRIMI-NATELY.
KNOW THINE ENEMY, KNOW THY-SELF.
KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU.
WHISPER
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! HE'S RIGHT OVER THERE!
WHISPER
FLUTTER...
LOOK!
HMM...
HEY!
THAT SPARROW IS TAKING THE RICE!


SIZZLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
DELI-
CIOUS.
KRIK!
...

GULP...
EXTREME EVIL...?
STILL, HE IS TRULY A BARBARIAN TO ROAST BIRDS ON HOLY GROUND. THE VERY IMAGE OF EXTREME EVIL.
HEH HEH... SOME SPARROWS ARE RATHER UNINTEL-LIGENT.
HEY! YOU SEE THAT?!
I HAD NO IDEA HE WAS WANTED FOR KILLING A KEPT CAT.
BUT THAT OLD CAT...
I HAVE A THOUGHT, SHORT.
DOGGONE IT! AND I LET A TOM LIKE THAT KILL MY TEAM!

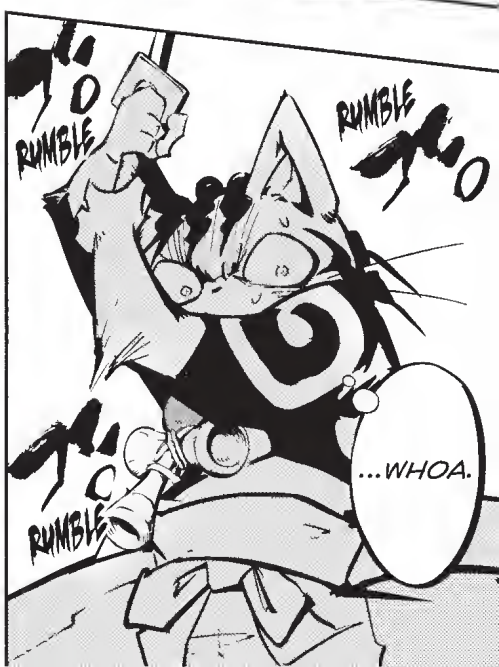
I SHALL LEND YOU MY SWORD.
WAIT UNTIL HE IS ASLEEP, THEN USE IT TO SLAY HIM.

...
HUH?
WHAT'RE YOU SAYIN'?
DO YOU NOT ...
...WISH TO AVENGE YOUR FRIENDS?

RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
THAT TOM IS A VILE FIEND.
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. HE WILL SOON ENTER THE WORLD OF DREAMS.
COWARDLY? NO.
WELL, YEAH, BUT... ATTACK HIM IN HIS SLEEP? ISN'T THAT...
ONCE HE HAS EATEN, HE WILL BECOME DROWSY.
THAT IS HOW CATS ARE.

KA-CRASH

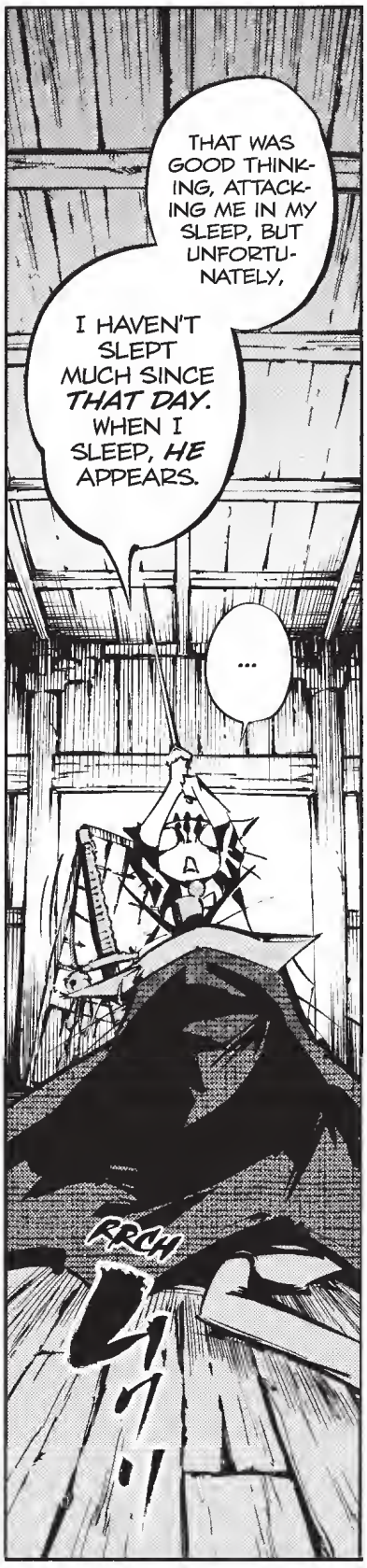
BUT IS THIS REALLY A GOOD IDEA? I JUST DON'T LIKE IT.
HE'S ACTUALLY SLEEPING RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, THE DIRTY MOG.
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH


RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
...WHOA.

!
...WISH TO AVENGE YOUR FRIENDS?
DO YOU NOT ...
TORIZŌ, MAKISUKE, AND THE REST OF MY GANG!!!
THE OLD TOM HAD NO RIGHT TO KILL MY BUDDIES!!!
DOGGONE IT, HE'S RIGHT! I'LL DO IT!!!
BAH

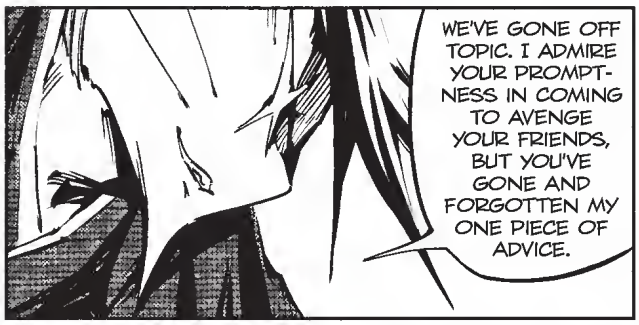
YOU'RE THAT PUNK KITTEN I RAN INTO IN TOWN YESTER-DAY.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
?!

THE RED WARRIOR.


THAT WAS GOOD THINKING, ATTACKING ME IN MY SLEEP, BUT UNFORTUNATELY,
I HAVEN'T SLEPT MUCH SINCE *THAT DAY*. WHEN I SLEEP, *HE* APPEARS.
...
RRCH

FUNNY, ISN'T IT?
...
THANKS TO MY INSOMNIA, I'VE MASTERED THE UNUSUAL ABILITY TO MAKE MY PRESENCE UNDETECTABLE WHILE AWAKE, SO I NEVER WANT FOR FOOD.
BUT NOT EVEN THE BIRDS TOOK NOTICE OF ME.
I WAS THERE, HOLDING THAT GRAIN OF RICE.

TO FIND... YOUR FINAL RESTING PLACE?
...


WE'VE GONE OFF TOPIC. I ADMIRE YOUR PROMPTNESS IN COMING TO AVENGE YOUR FRIENDS, BUT YOU'VE GONE AND FORGOTTEN MY ONE PIECE OF ADVICE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT KATANA?

WELL, I AM ON A JOURNEY TO FIND MY FINAL RESTING PLACE.
IT'S A VERY APPROPRIATE ABILITY FOR A CAT WHO KEEPS LIVING THOUGH DEAD.

EEP...!
H-! HELP ME, SHISHI-WAKA-SA...
BAH!
OH.
YOU CANNOT SLAY ME WITH ANOTHER CAT'S WEAPON.
BECAUSE IT DOES NOT SHARE YOUR DESIRE TO KILL ME.

GOODBYE.
SMIRK
A PRRRAYER FOR YOUR SOUL.
SLASH

ネコガハラ
NekogaHara

HH T ZSHHH T T
HH!
SPLITCH!

SPLASH
NEKOGAHARA
CHAPTER 4:
POMPEY SASS II
HIROYUKI TAKEI
takei

HAGH...!
UGH...!
SHISH
SHISH
SHISH...!

FWOOOOSH...
SHISHI-WAKA-SAN!!
I THOUGHT YOU BAILED ON ME!!!

WHY— WHY YOU! YOU USED ME AS A DECOY?!
RUN AWAY? I? NEVER.
DID YOU HONESTLY THINK I WOULD ENTRUST THE TASK TO YOU?
FIP
YOU'RE AS COWARDLY AS THEY COME!!!
AND THEN YOU STAB HIM IN THE BACK?!
THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS COWARDICE IN THESE PIDDLING MURDER GAMES.
HEH HEH.

TO LIVE IS VICTORY, TO BE DEFEATED IS DEATH. AND THUS EVERYTHING RETURNS TO NOTHING.
WHEREVER YOU GO, SWORD-PLAY WILL NEVER BE ANYTHING MORE THAN THE ART OF KILLING.
...

I BELIEVE THAT THIS PATHETIC DEATH IS THE MOST FITTING END SUCH A VILLAIN SUCH COULD HOPE FOR.
HOW MANY DECLAWED CATS HE HAS SENT TO NOTH-INGNESS?
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW MANY INNOCENTS THIS VILLAIN HAS SLAIN?

...I HAVE ALWAYS CHOSEN MY OWN WAY OF LIFE.
I LOATHE THE IDEA THAT MURDER HAS AN AESTHETIC.
IN ORDER TO BE MYSELF...
I'D LOVE FOR YOUR GROUPIES TO SEE YOU LIKE THIS!
HEH... FELINE OF JUSTICE, MY TAIL.
YOU POMPOUS ASS! SAYIN' ALL THAT FLOWERY NON-SENSE...
...KEH!
HEH HEH... I BEHAVE APPROPRIATELY IN FRONT OF THE MOLLIES, OF COURSE.

IF THE SHE-CATS' CRIES THUNDER ACROSS THE NATION, THEN MY NAME WILL REACH GREATER LORDS.
AND THOSE LORDS WILL, IN TURN, MAKE USE OF THE MOLLIES' VOICES.

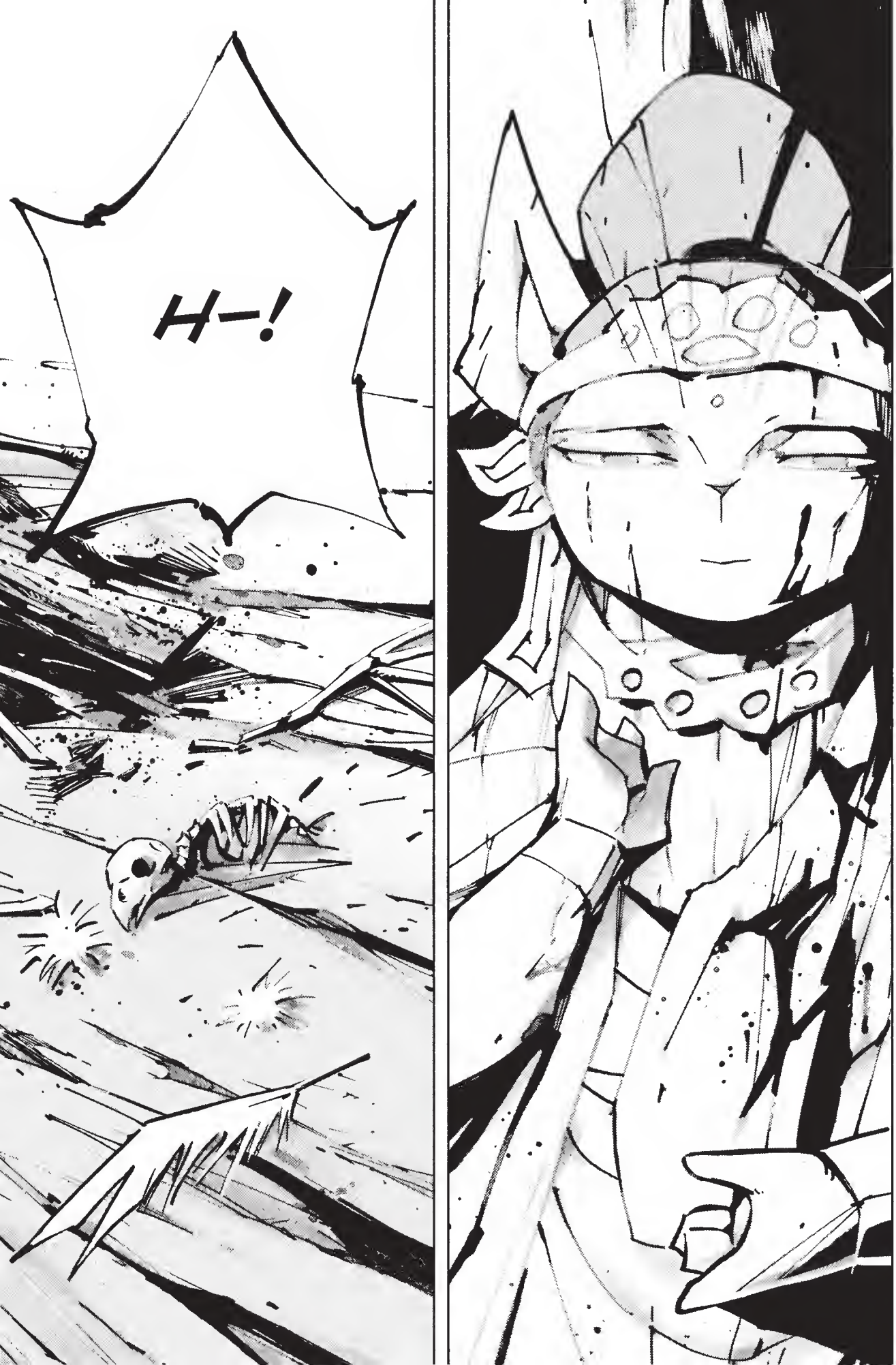
BE WISE, SHORT.
LIVING IS NOT ABOUT KILLING YOUR ENEMY.
SHHH
IT IS INFINITELY MORE IMPORTANT THAT, BY DOING SO, YOU IMPROVE YOUR REPUTATION.

MY NAME WILL REMAIN, AS THE ETERNAL, BEAUTIFUL SWORDS-FELINE.
THUS, I SHALL NEVER RETURN TO NOTHINGNESS, NOT EVEN IN DEATH.

HIS HEAD...?!
...!
...
...HELLO... I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE MET, NORACHIYO, OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS.
I DOUBT YOU CAN BREATHE WITH THAT BACK INJURY, BUT HAVE YOU ANY FINAL WORDS?
WHEEZE ...
...
COUGH...! ...HACK!

NOW, STOP TROUBLING YOUR MIND OVER TRIFLES AND HOLD HIM DOWN.
IT'S ABOUT TIME I RETURNED WITH HIS HEAD.

HELP... ME!
PLEASE...!

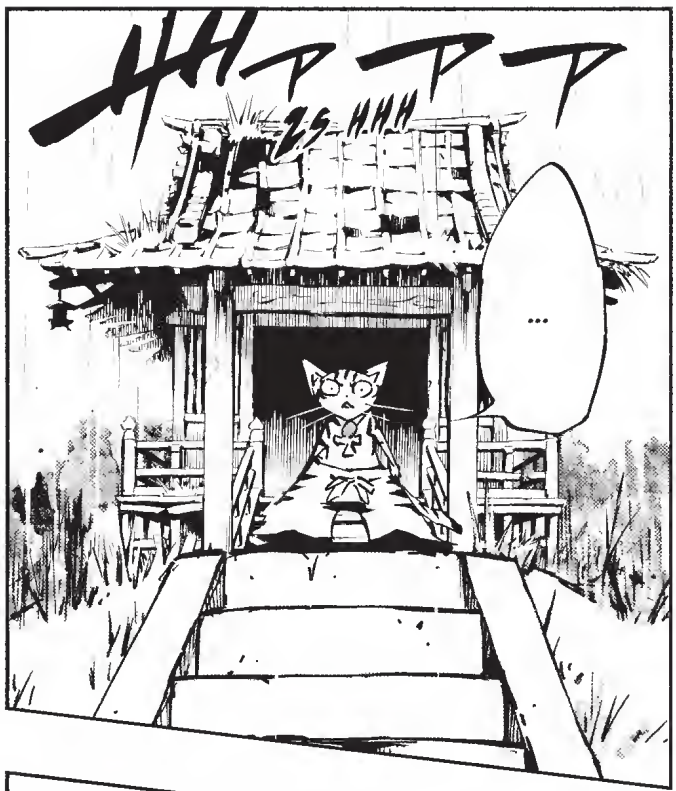

H-!

YOU JUST TOLD ME YOU WERE ON A JOURNEY TO FIND YOUR FINAL RESTING PLACE!
WHAT THE HELL, YOU DOGGONE OLD MOG?!!
AFTER ALL THAT, YOU'RE BEGGIN' FOR YOUR LIFE?!!! WHAT THE HELL?!
HEY !!!
HEH HA HA HA!!
LOOK AT THAT PATHETIC FACE! D'YA SEE THAT, SHORT?! THIS IS WHO HE REALLY IS!!!
...
HEH...!

...THANKS FOR PICKING ME UP, PUNK KITTEN.
HM?
ZOOM
!
AND YOU'RE BEGGING FOR YOUR LIFE! THAT'S RICH!
GO ON! SHOW ME MORE OF YOUR MISERABLE MUG!
PFFT
!!!

AH!!!
IT'LL BE A LITTLE EASIER TO GET OUT OF HERE.
...NOW...
HNGH ?!
...?!!
BAM

WHOOSH
POW
WHAM
POW


HHPPP
ZS HHH
...

THAT OLD MOG...

THERE'S NO WAY.
IN THIS RAIN, WITH THOSE WOUNDS? HE AIN'T GONNA LAST LONG.

POW
WHAM
POW

!
AREN'T YOU GONNA GO AFTER HIM? IF YOU LOSE HIM NOW...
HEY...
GROOOAR!
SHISHI-WAKA...
...SAN?

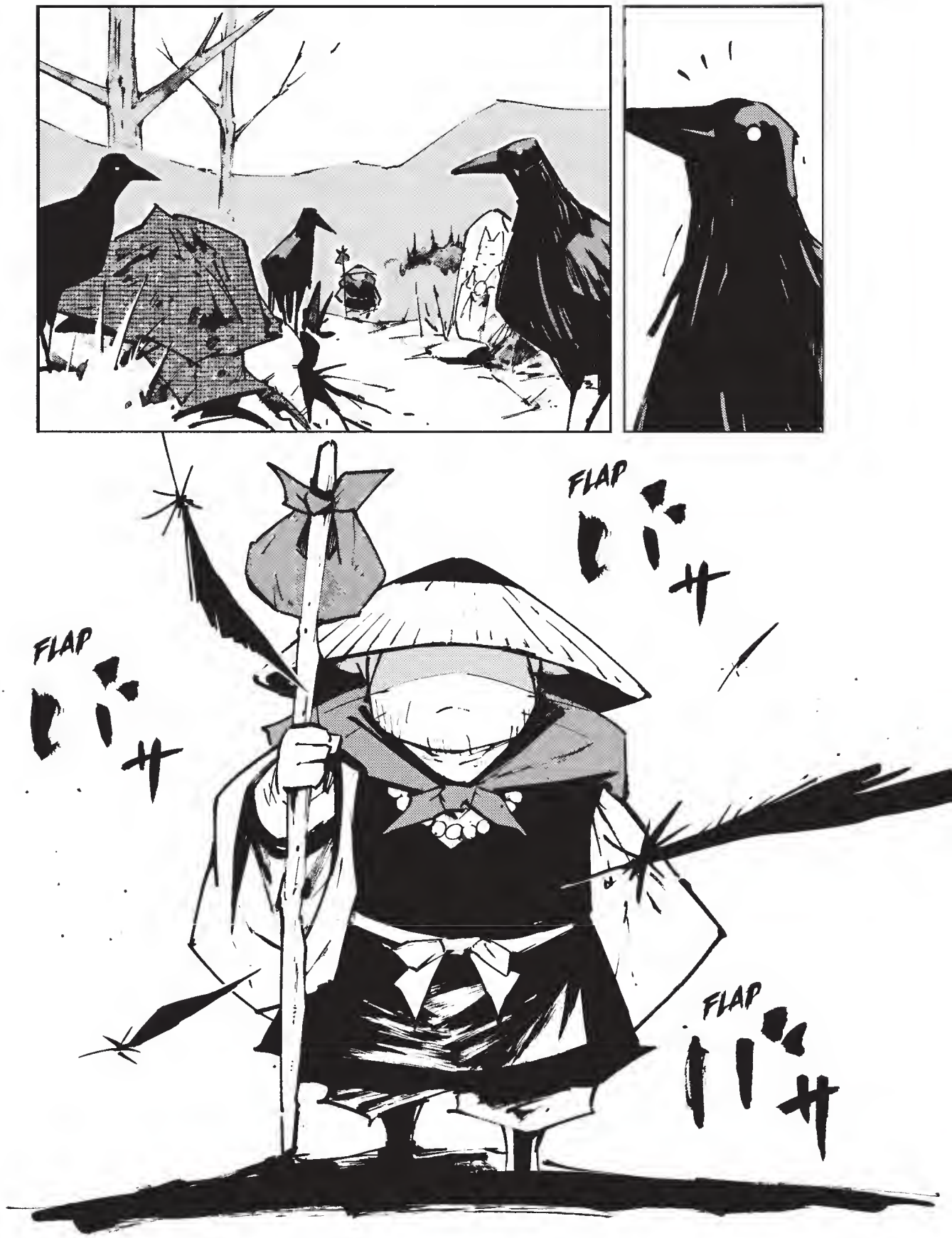
...LOOK HERE, SHORT.
HE LEFT ME SOMETHING IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS HEAD— THE BELL FROM HIS KATANA.
IT'S FADED... BUT THERE'S NO MISTAKING THIS CREST.
I SEE...
SO *THAT* IS WHO HE *TRULY* IS.
SMIRK

ZSHHH
THIS BELL...
...MAY BE WORTH MORE THAN HIS HEAD, AFTER ALL.
WHACK
KA-CRASH

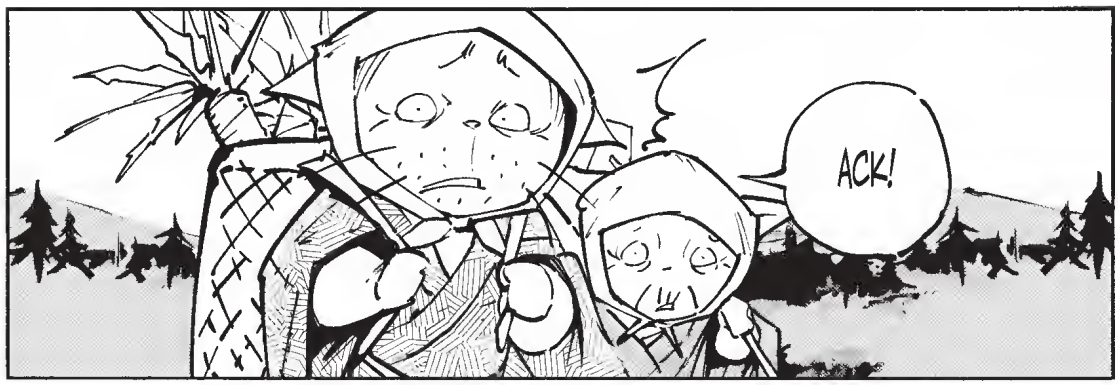
ネコガハラ
NekogaHara

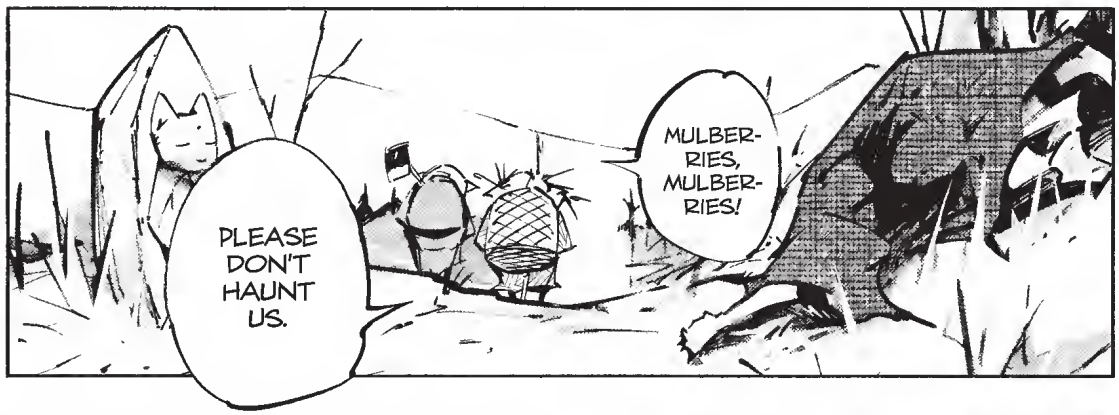
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
TMP
CAW!
CAW!

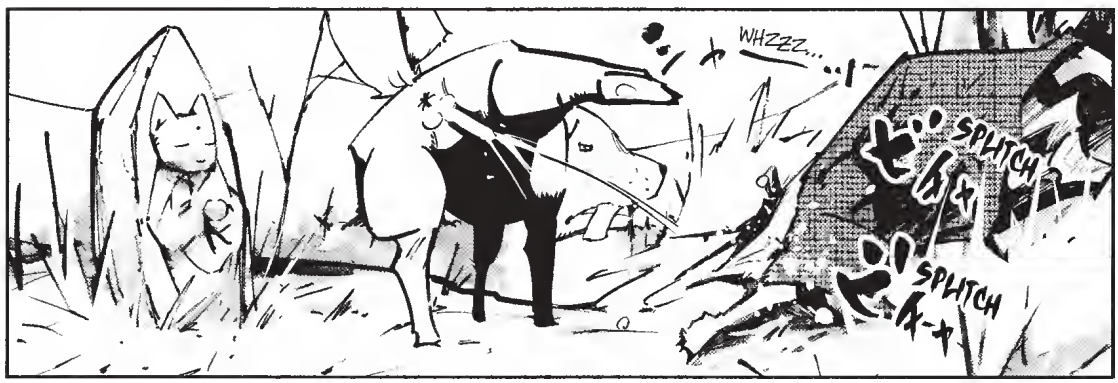
NEKOGAHARA
CHAPTER 5:
POMPEY SASS III
HIROYUKI TAKEI


FLAP
FLAP
FLAP

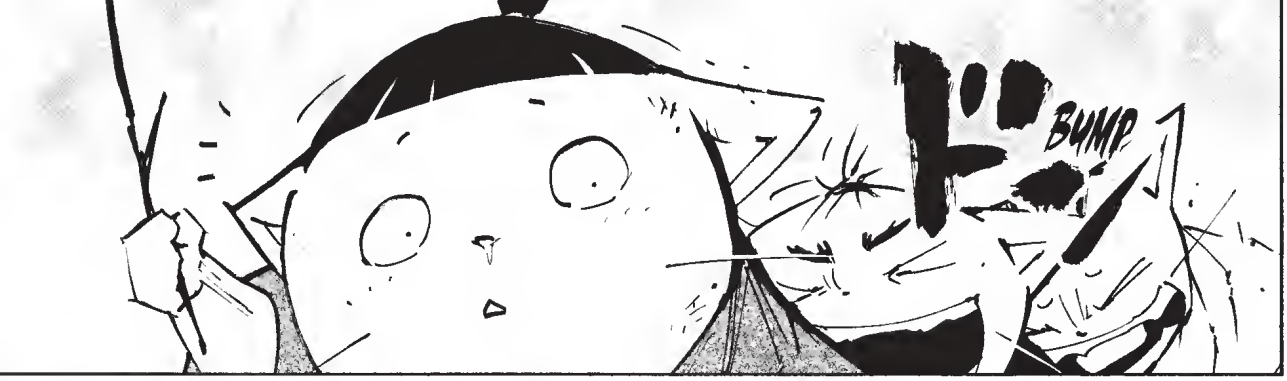
THE SAME OLD SCENE, AGAIN.
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD...


ACK!


PLEASE DON'T HAUNT US.
MULBER-RIES, MULBER-RIES!

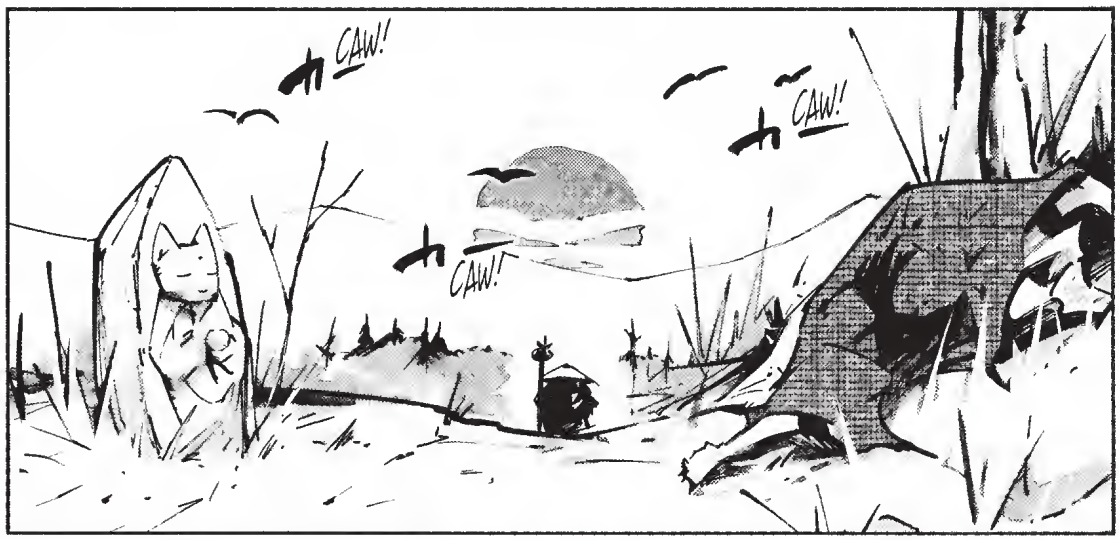

WHZZZ...
SPLITCH
SPLITCH

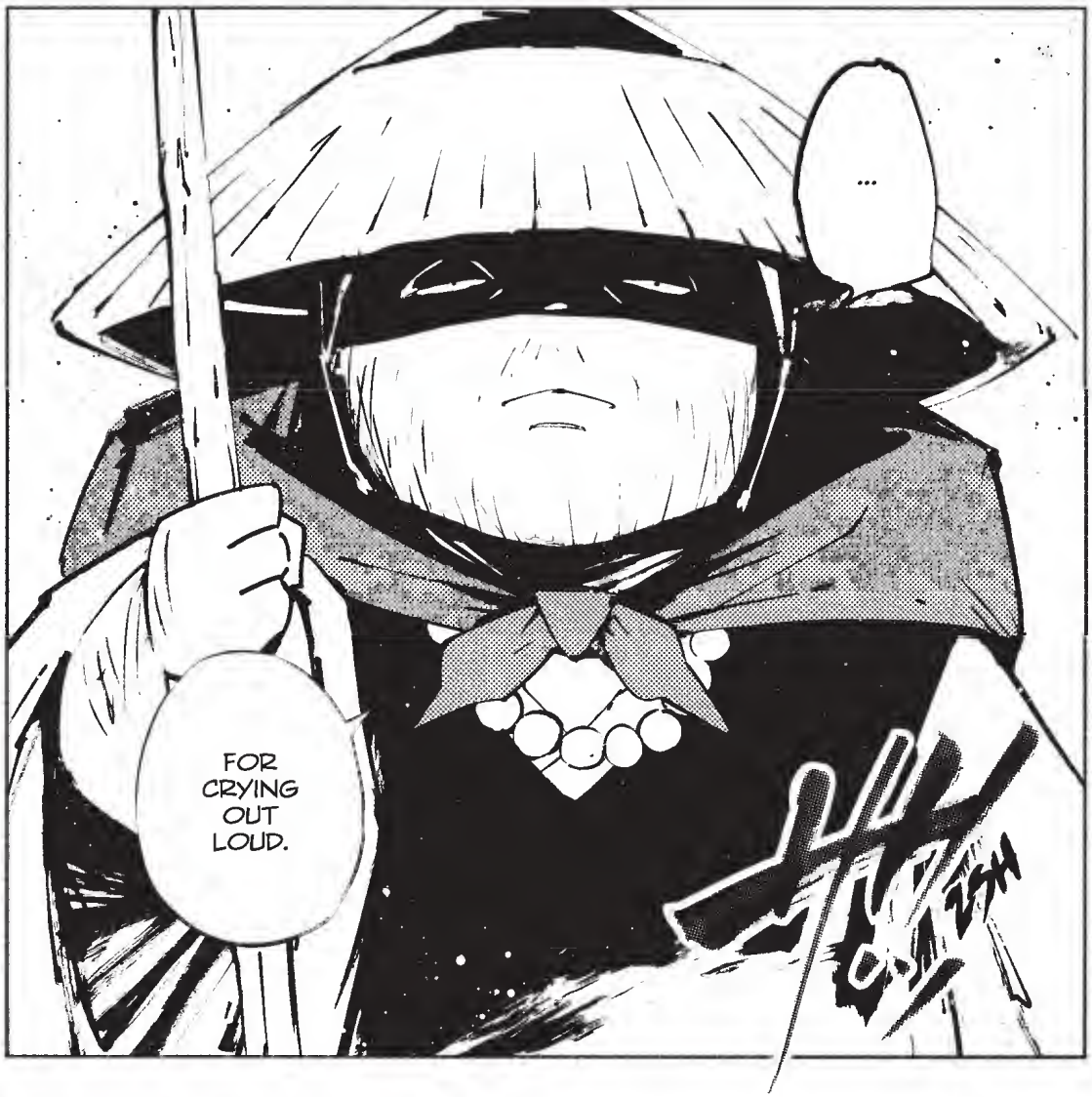
WHEEE!

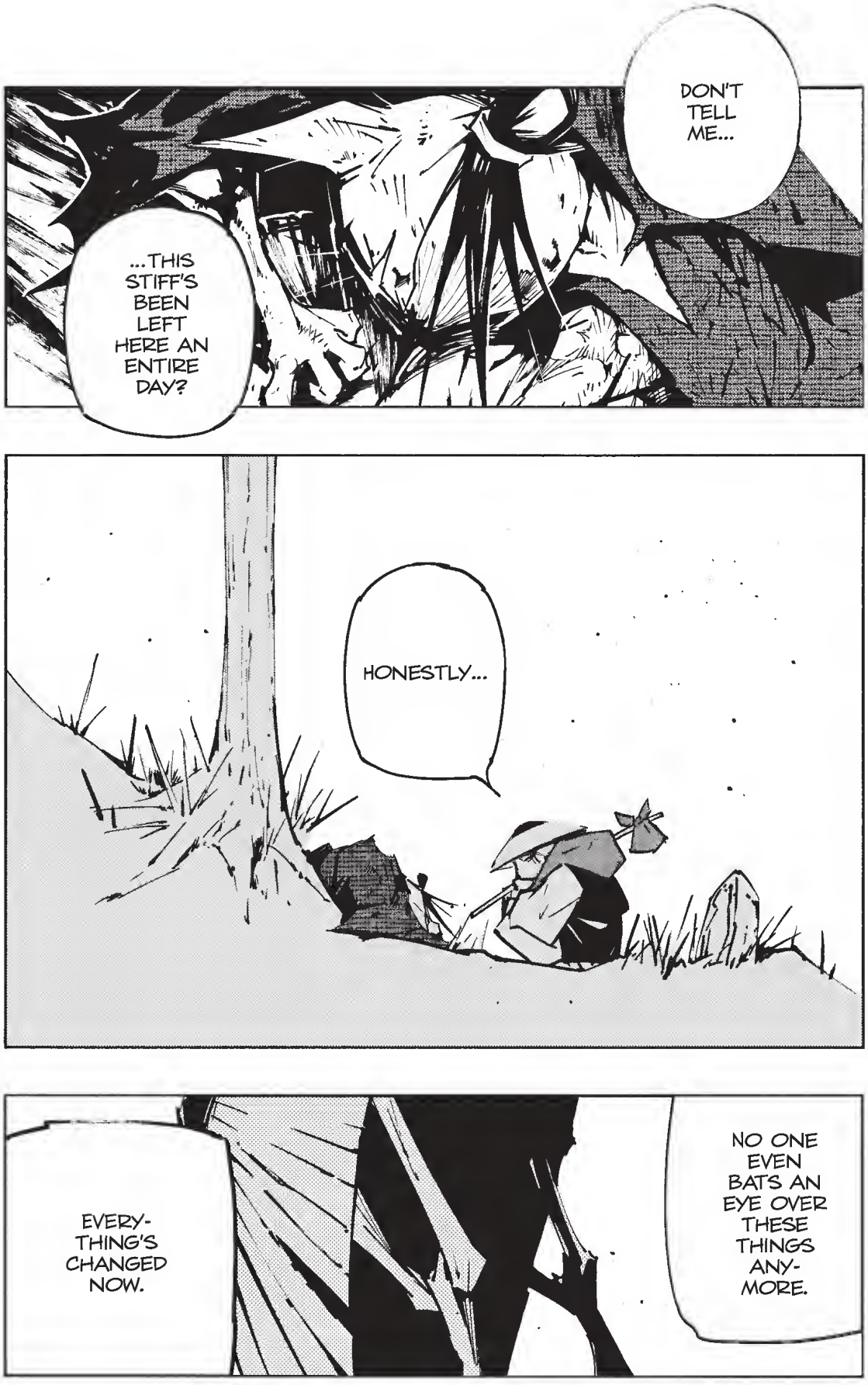

BUMP

AH HA HA HA HA!
WHACK
WHACK

WHZZZ
PEH
CAN'T SELL TO A CORPSE, NOT EVEN MEDICINE.
OH, HOW DREAD-FUL.




...
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.
SHIII


DON'T TELL ME...
...THIS STIFF'S BEEN LEFT HERE AN ENTIRE DAY?
HONESTLY...
NO ONE EVEN BAT'S AN EYE OVER THESE THINGS ANY-MORE.
EVERY-THING'S CHANGED NOW.

EVER SINCE THE GREAT CIVIL WAR, SPURRED ON BY THE PEOPLE'S RIVAL WARLORDS.
MANY PEOPLE DIED IN THAT WAR.
AND MANY CATS GOT CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE.
CATS WERE ALWAYS A WILLFUL SPECIES—WE REFUSE TO LET ANYONE CONTROL US.
IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO US WHO RULES THE WORLD.
BUT WHAT HAP-PENED?
PEOPLE STARTED FEEDING US, AND WE ALL WENT CRAZY.
MONEY, HONOR—WE'RE MANIPULATED BY THESE THINGS WITH NO VALUE, AND WE KILL OUR OWN. COULD THERE BE ANYTHING MORE IDIOTIC?

A CAT WHO HAS BEEN KEPT BY A PERSON ...
...CAN NEVER LIVE IN THE WORLD OF STRAYS AGAIN.
THEY END UP LIKE YOU– DYING IN A DITCH, WITH NO ONE TO SEE YOU OFF TO THE NEXT LIFE.

AND YOU'RE ONE OF THE IDIOTS.

I PRRRAY FOR YOUR SOUL.

KA-POP
WELL...

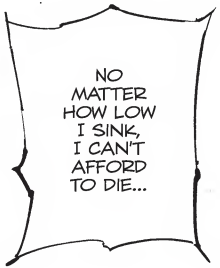
I MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT I AM TECHNI-CALLY A PRIEST.
I SUPPOSE I COULD GIVE YOU A PROPER SENDOFF.
BUMP
BUMP
BUMP
REST IN PEACE, IF YOU CAN.

HEY, YOU OLD FOX.
CRUNCH
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
ISS
LICK

FOR A PRIEST, YOU HAVE SOME DAMN FINE SAKÉ.
IT'S MADE ME FEEL ALIVE AGAIN.

...UNTIL IT'S TIME!

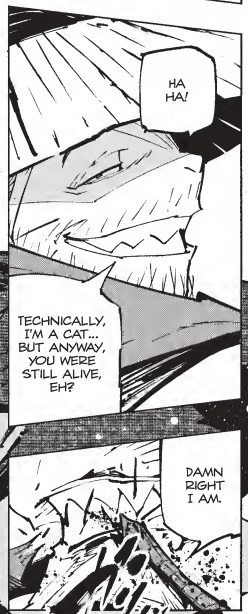
THUD


NO MATTER HOW LOW I SINK, I CAN'T AFFORD TO DIE...

WHEEZE

I HAVE TO FIND IT...
THIS ISN'T MY FINAL RESTING PLACE.
THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE FOR ME TO DIE.

...

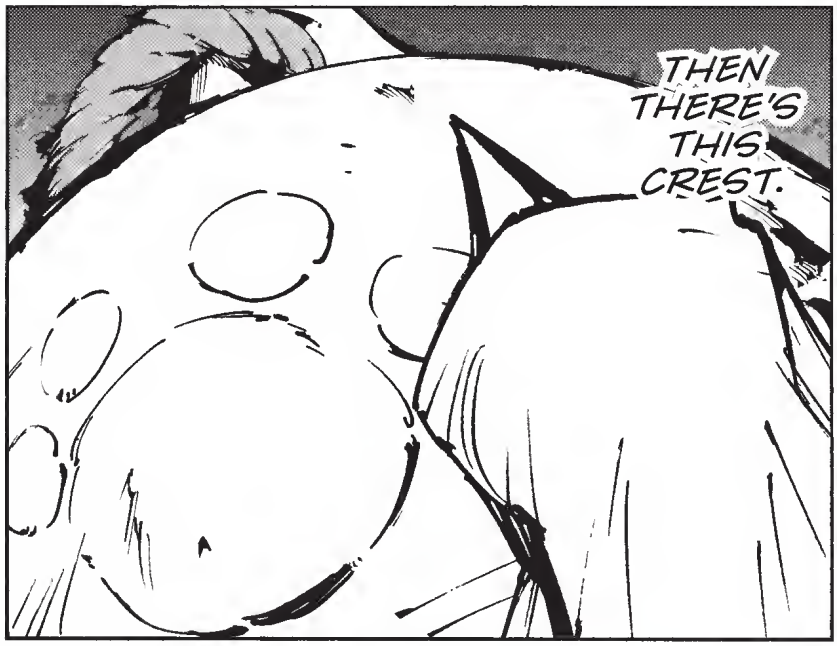

HA HA!
TECHNICALLY, I'M A CAT... BUT ANYWAY, YOU WERE STILL ALIVE, EH?
DAMN RIGHT I AM.
CRUNCH

WHEEZE
WHEEZE
COUGH!

SIGN: ŌTAMAYA
大玉屋
HA HA HA HA HA!
IT'S MY TREAT TODAY, SHORT! HAVE SOME FUN BEFORE YOU GO!
TEH HEH HEH. THANKS, SHISHI-WAKA-SAN.
BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN TO A PLACE LIKE THIS BEFORE. I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT...

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THAT BELL YOU TOOK FROM HIS KATANA?
AND ANYWAY, UM...
HMPH!
YOU'LL NEVER SURPASS YOUR HONORABLE FATHER WITH THAT ATTITUDE, SHORT!
HA HA HA! NEVER MIND THAT, JUST KEEP AMUSING YOURSELF! I'M GOING TO THE PRIVY. YOU TAKE YOUR TIME HERE!
NAH, HE'S JUST A PERVERTED OLD MAN.
HEH HEH...
I AM A DEEPLY LUCKY TOM.

I PICK A KITTEN UP OFF THE STREETS,
AND LO, HE'S THE SON OF *THE* AMEMURA-DONO. I'LL GET GOOD USE OUT OF HIM.
LITTER


THEN THERE'S THIS CREST.

AHING

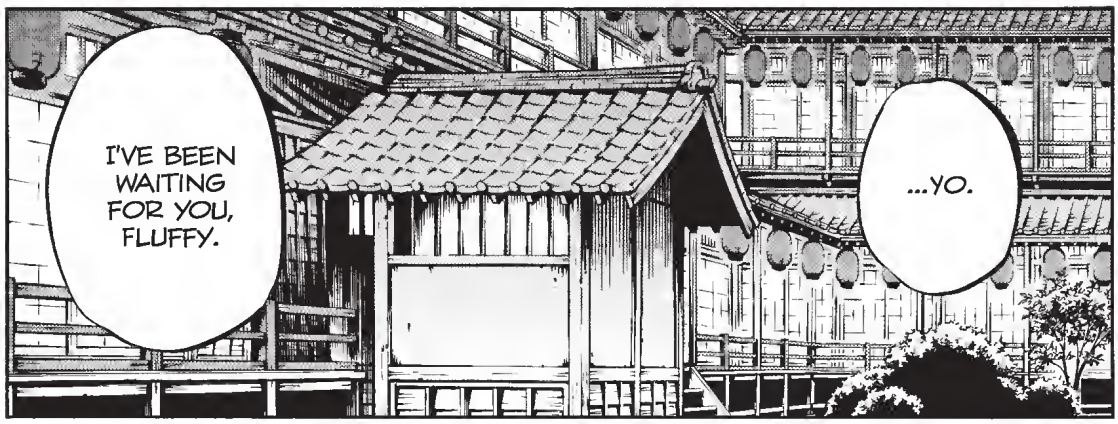
ASSUMING IT ISN'T FAKE, HIS OWNER WAS...
HEH HEH.
HEH HEH HEH!
SHFF!
HAAA HA HA!!!
I'M SO THRILLED, EVEN COVERING MY WASTE WITH LITTER FILLS ME WITH GLEE!!!
SHFF!
SHFF!
SHFF!

SKFF
...HI THERE.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, FLUFFY.

THAT BEING THE CASE, I CAME TO GET IT BACK.
AND AT THE MOMENT, EVEN YOU ARE EXPOSED.
I PRRRAY FOR YOUR SOUL.

AND JUST SO YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T WANT TO HIDE HERE.
BUT IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE I CAN FIGHT FAIR, THANKS TO YOU.
...
AND SINCE YOU WALKED OFF WITH MY SWORD, I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS.

ネコガハラ
NekogaHara


I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, FLUFFY.
...YO.

AND SINCE YOU WALKED OFF WITH MY SWORD, I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS.
LITTER
AND JUST SO YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T WANT TO HIDE HERE.
BUT IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE I CAN FIGHT FAIR, THANKS TO YOU.

THAT BEING THE CASE, I CAME TO GET IT BACK.
...
AND AT THE MOMENT, EVEN YOU ARE EXPOSED.
WHILE I WAS INCAPACI-TATED, I CARVED THIS SPECIAL STICK.
NEXT, I'LL BE CARVING YOU.
BWOH

NEKOGAHARA

CHAPTER 6: PEACH FUZZ, DEEP PENETRATION AGENT

I *PRRRAY* FOR YOUR SOUL.

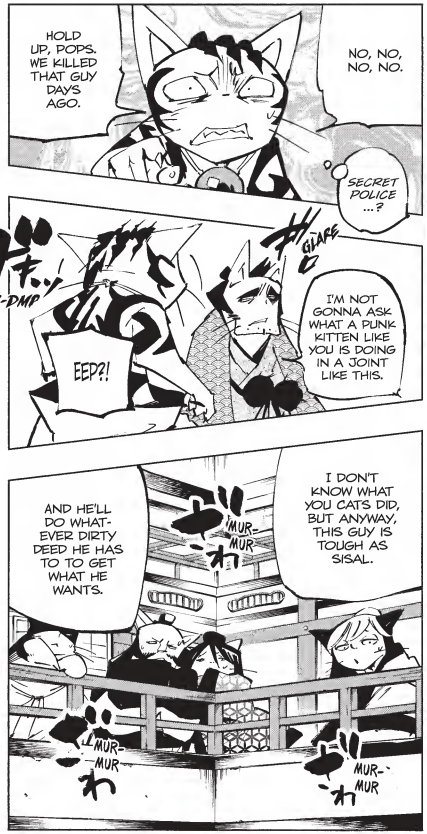
HIROYUKI TAKEI

SIGN: ŌTAMAYA

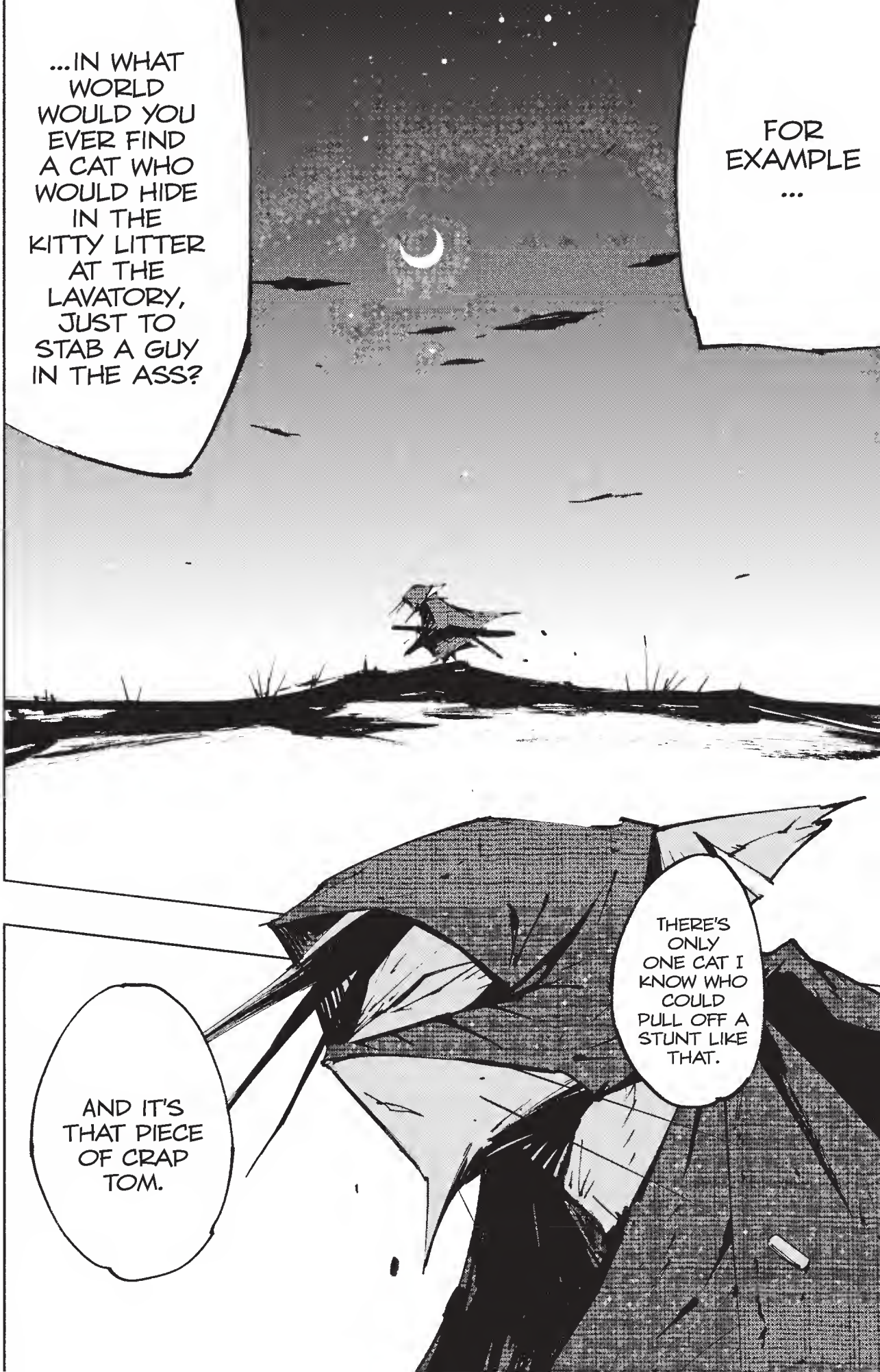
YEAH.
THIS IS BRUTAL.

SO. YOU WERE WATCHING THE SWORD, AND A CAT RAN OFF WITH IT. CAN YOU DESCRIBE HIM, FOREMAN?
HE WHITTLED A STICK INTO A HOOK AND SHOVED IT UP HIS ASS. IF WE TRY AND YANK IT OUT, IT'LL RIP HIM A NEW ONE FOR SURE.

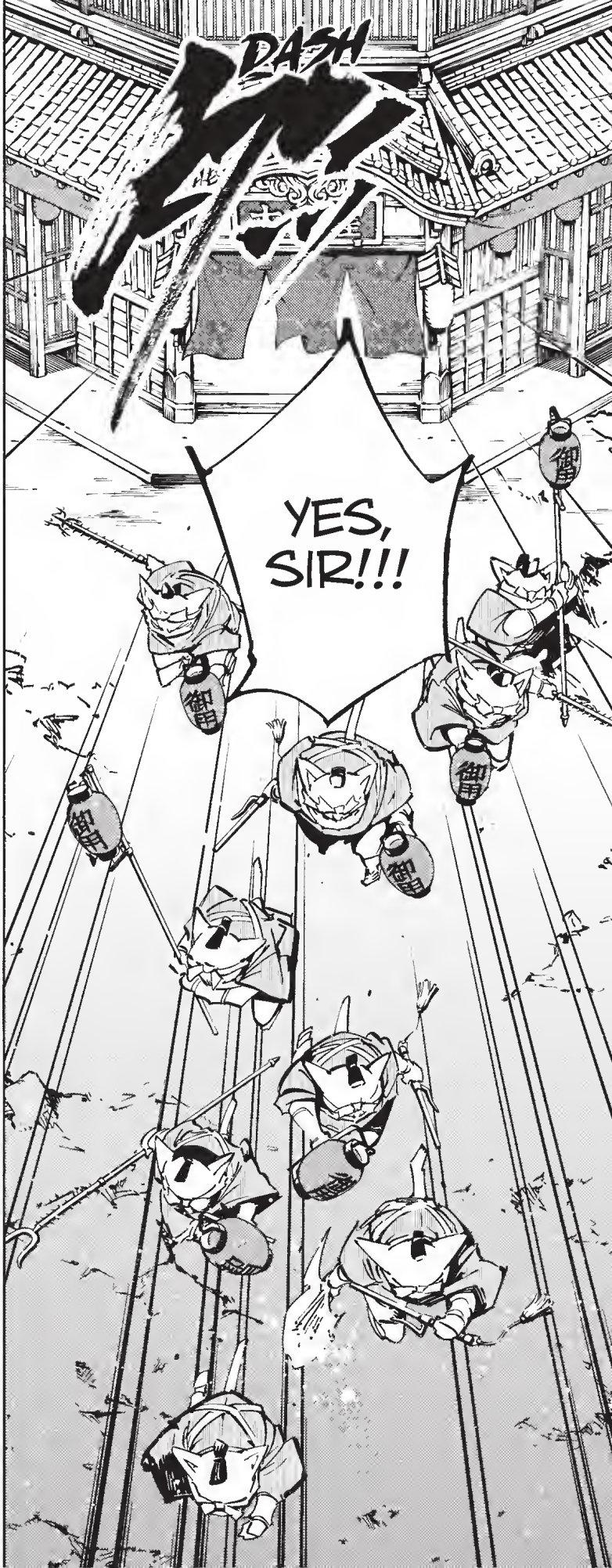
I COULDN'T HAVE HIM STAY HERE...SO I JUST GAVE HIM THE SWORD AND DIDN'T EVEN LOOK AT HIS FACE.
BUT HE WAS EVEN MORE TERRIFY-ING THAN HE WAS SMELLY.
HE WAS A TOM, AND HE STANK TO HIGH HEAVEN.
YES, CON-STABLE.
IF YOU'D GIVEN HIM ANY TROUBLE, YOU COULD'VE BEEN SKEWERED, TOO.
SIGH... WELL, YOU PROBABLY MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.
I KNOW HIM WELL.
I'M NOT TRYING TO THREATEN YOU.
EEP!

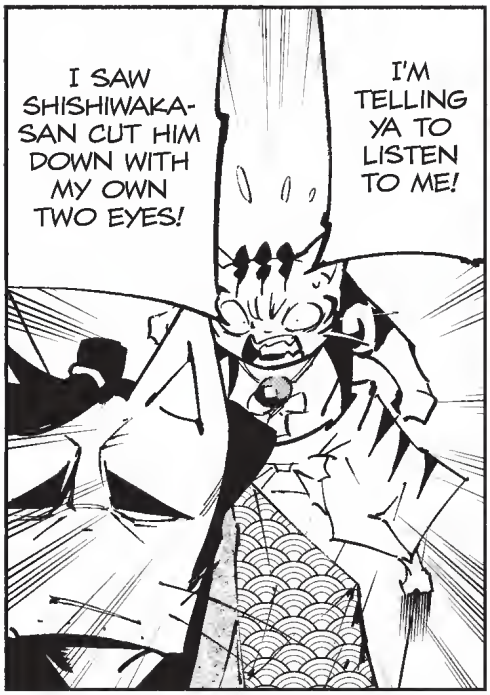

HOLD UP, POPS. WE KILLED THAT GUY DAYS AGO.
NO, NO, NO, NO.
SECRET POLICE ...?
B-DMP
GIARG
I'M NOT GONNA ASK WHAT A PUNK KITTEN LIKE YOU IS DOING IN A JOINT LIKE THIS.
EEP?!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU CATS DID, BUT ANYWAY, THIS GUY IS TOUGH AS SISAL.
AND HE'LL DO WHAT-EVER DIRTY DEED HE HAS TO TO GET WHAT HE WANTS.
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR

BECAUSE, AS A MEMBER OF THE SECRET POLICE...
...I, SHIRIYA ABYHE! ...
Wanted Feline
...HAVE BEEN AFTER THE TOM ON THIS POSTER FOR QUITE SOME TIME.


...IN WHAT WORLD WOULD YOU EVER FIND A CAT WHO WOULD HIDE IN THE KITTY LITTER AT THE LAVATORY, JUST TO STAB A GUY IN THE ASS?
FOR EXAMPLE ...
THERE'S ONLY ONE CAT I KNOW WHO COULD PULL OFF A STUNT LIKE THAT.
AND IT'S THAT PIECE OF CRAP TOM.

SPLIT UP AND SET UP A PERIMETER AS FAR AS THE RIDGE.
YES, SIR!
ALL RIGHT. HE COULDN'T HAVE GONE FAR.
HE HAD A GAPING WOUND IN HIS BACK!
BUT COME ON!
DON'T WASTE TIME GETTING A HOLD OF THE CHECKING STATIONS. THAT MOG HAS NO USE FOR MAJOR ROADS.
YES, SIR!
IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, BUT CALL AS MUCH BACKUP AS YOU CAN.
THAT IS, OF COURSE, UNLESS YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH... HE DOESN'T GIVE A CRAP ABOUT FELINE LIFE.
AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT DRAW YOUR SWORDS.





LANTERNS: POLICE

THEN YOU'D BETTER WATCH OUT OR THAT MONSTER MIGHT AMBUSH YOU IN THE LITTER BOX AND SHOVE A STICK UP YOUR ASS.
WOULD YOU NOW?
SMIRK
...D...
DON'T TELL ME THAT...
I'LL BE TOO SCARED TO EVER TAKE A DUMP AGAIN...

SECRET POLICE?
WHAT MAKES HIM ANY DIFFERENT THAN YOUR AVERAGE POLICE-MAN?
...SO?
BLUB
BLUB
WHAT'S THAT? NEVER HEARD OF 'EM.

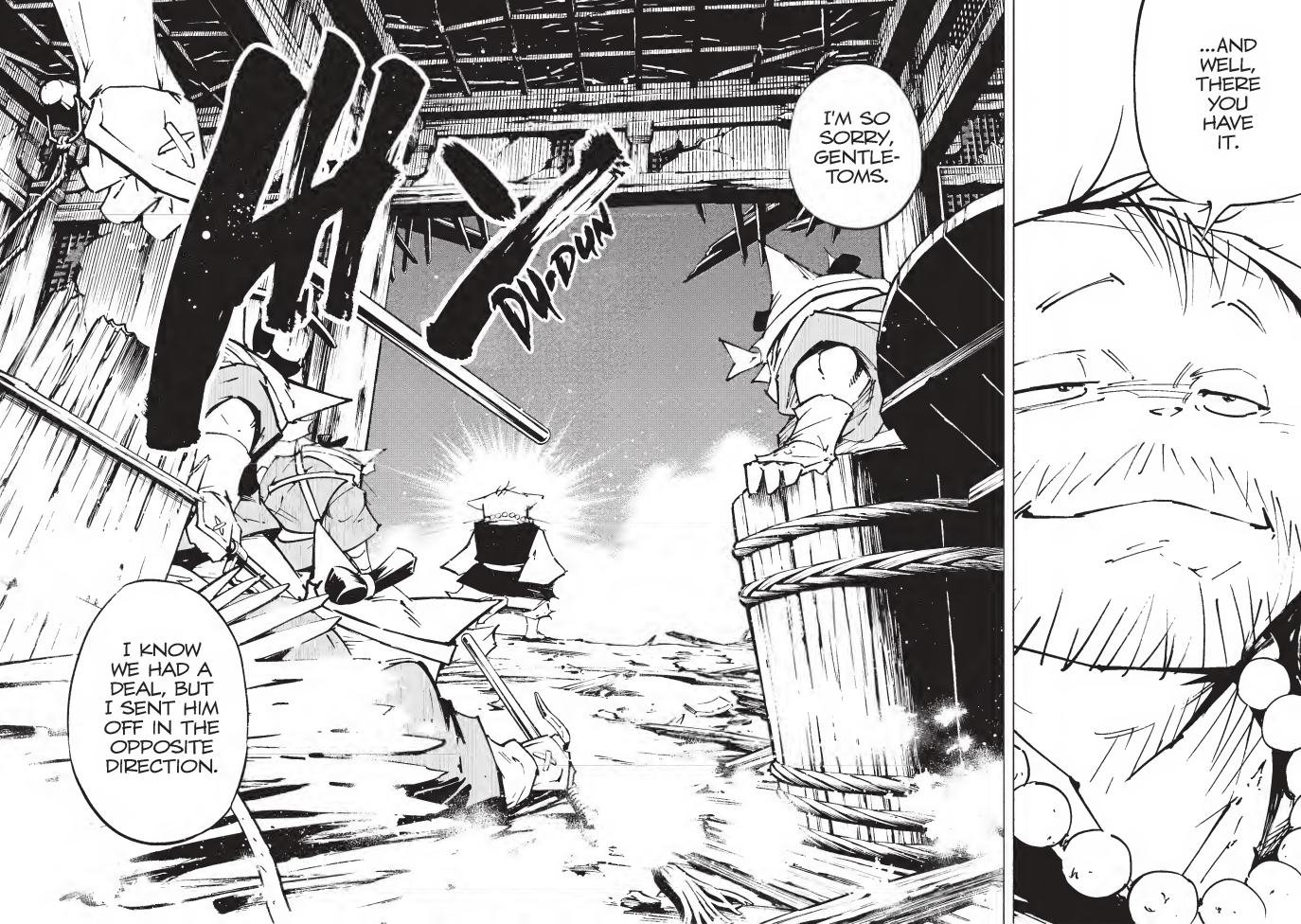
IF HE'S ON THE CASE, HE'LL SNIFF THIS PLACE OUT IN NO TIME.
WHETHER I HAD A CHOICE OR NOT, IT WAS CARELESS OF ME TO MAKE SUCH A SPECTACLE.
I COULDN'T SAY.
APPARENTLY HE WORKS FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL, BUT ANYWAY, HE'S PERSISTENT.
CRACKLE
WE JUST NEED TO THROW OFF THE INVESTIGATION, EH?
HEH HEH! LOOKS LIKE I'VE TAKEN IN THE WRONG FUGITIVE.
SO?
CRACKLE
...HM?
I ONLY STOPPED BY TO PAY YOU FOR THE SAKÉ AND TO THANK YOU FOR RESTORING MY HEALTH.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
...I SEE.

I SINCERELY HOPE...
...YOU WON'T TRY ANY-THING STUPID.
ZSH
OR ELSE...
...YOU'LL GET YOURSELF HURT.

THIS POLICEMAN'S GOT SOME SKILLS TO SPEAK OF THEN.
OHO...
SOMEONE YOU KNOW FROM THE WAR?
BLUB
BLUB
DON'T ASK ME-I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT HIM.
I'M SURE HE MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF SOMEWHERE, BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE HIM, SO I'M LEAVING.
...YOU SURE ARE A SPRIGHTLY CAT FOR ONE FRESH OFF HIS DEATHBED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS, BUT IT SMELLS DISGUST-ING.
ANYWAY, WHAT DO YOU SAY? THE FOOD'S READY AND YOU COULD GROOM YOUR-SELF BEFORE YOU LEAVE.

I'M NO MATCH FOR YOU, YOU OLD FOX.
HA HA HA.
HE SPENDS ALL HIS TIME HURLING INSULTS...AND IN THE END, HE LEAVES WITHOUT EVER ASKING MY NAME.
HONEST-LY...
HOW KIND OF HIM.

I HOPE...
...YOU FIND YOUR MASTER, NORACHIYO.


I KNOW WE HAD A DEAL, BUT I SENT HIM OFF IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.
DU-DUN
I'M SO SORRY, GENTLE-TOMS.
...AND WELL, THERE YOU HAVE IT.

SLASH
YOU CAN'T ASSUME ANYONE IS DEAD UNTIL YOU'VE SEEN HIM CUT IN TWO.
THERE, YOU SEE?

DRAG HIM ALONG.
OUR TARGET IS IN SIGHT.
SPLAT

MEE-YOW! ♡
HOO HEE HEE.
...SO THAT'S THE "NORACHIYO" LITTLE-FOLD WAS TELLING ME ABOUT.
TO BE CONTINUED...

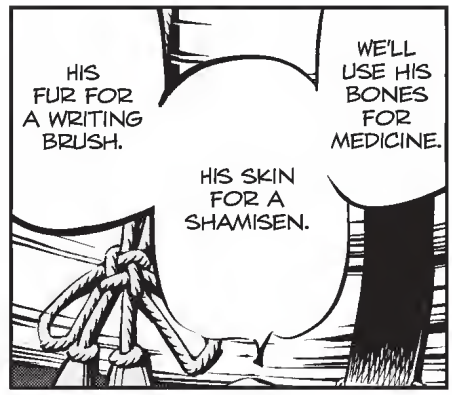
TRANSLATION NOTES

A *prrrayer* for your souls, page 5

Norachiyo recites a shortened version of a Buddhist chant that means, "I trust all to Amitabha." Amitabha is the principal Buddha in the Pure Land Sect of Buddhism, and in this case, Norachiyo is commending the souls of his victims to him. As a cat, Norachiyo pronounces the prayer with a bit of a feline accent.

Skin for a shamisen, page 13

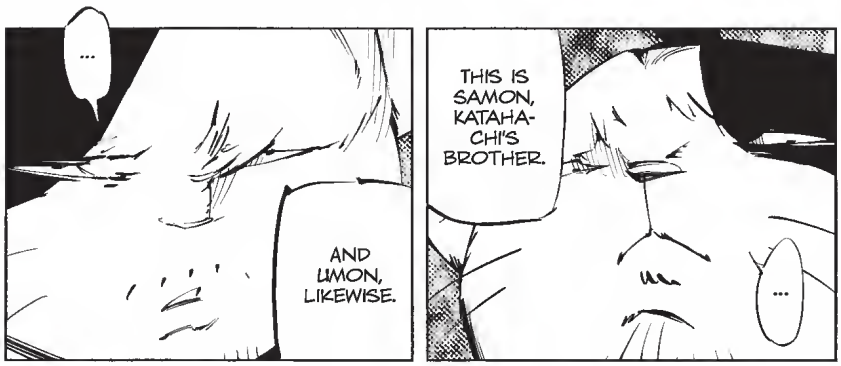
A shamisen is a Japanese musical instrument, something like a banjo with three strings. The body of the instrument (the round part) is covered on both sides with skin. As the reader can guess, often cat skin is the type of skin used.



Norachiyo, page 21

The name Norachiyo is what is called a *yōmyō*, or childhood name. In Norachiyo's day, it was not uncommon for nobles and warriors to be given a childhood name at birth, which would later be changed at their coming of age ceremony. The *-chiyo* ending was common for childhood names, and in fact the great shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu was called Takechiyo when he was a boy. That being the case, there wouldn't have been many grown men or cats who still had -chiyo in their names.

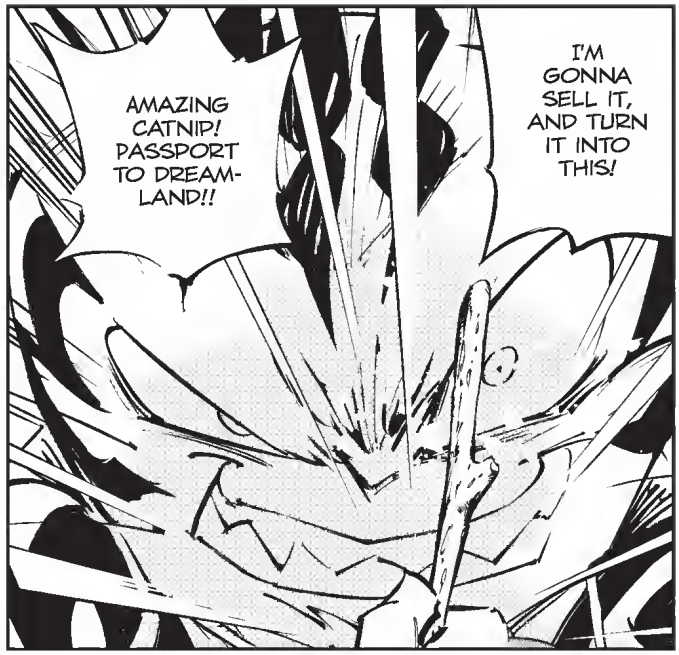
L&R Brothers, page 38



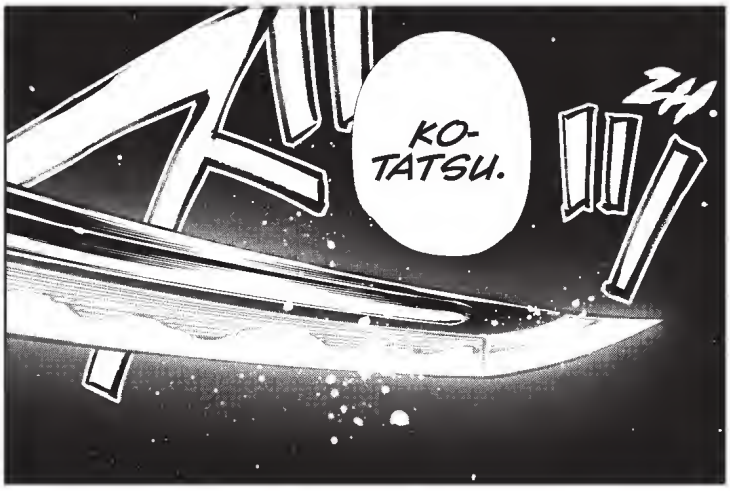
The names Samon and Umon mean, roughly, "the one on the left" and "the one on the right," respectively. They may have been named after their markings, as Samon has a dark patch over his left eye, and Umon has one over the right. Together, they are the Left & Right, or L&R Brothers.

Passport to dreamland, page 61

In describing his ideal product, Short literally says, "Good catnip, feels like a dream," which is a play on the title of a Japanese travel show called "Ii Tabi, Yume Kibun". The pun is that the word for "catnip" (*matatabi*) is similar to the word for "travel" (*tabi*). The translators used plays on the names of shows from America's Travel Channel, retaining the "dream" aspect, as it is somewhat important to the theme of this chapter.



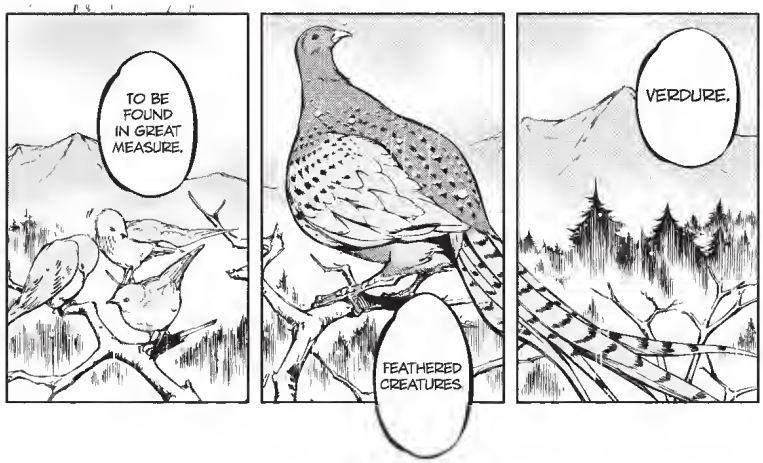
Kotatsu, page 71



The characters in the name of Norachiyo's sword mean "tiger" and "foot warmer." The word *kotatsu* usually refers to a table with a heater under it and a blanket around the edges to keep the warmth from escaping—a very popular item in the winter, especially among household cats. By changing the first kanji character to one meaning "tiger," the sword's name may be referring to the fact that a feline friend can also be an effective foot warmer.

In great measure, page 89

In the original Japanese, Norachiyo waxes poetic, listing the blessings of his surroundings using only words ending in *-dori*: *amayadori* (shelter from the rain), *midori* (greenery), *yamadori* (mountain bird, specifically the copper pheasant), and *yoridori midori* (rich variety). The translators attempted to replicate the effect with almost-rhymes.

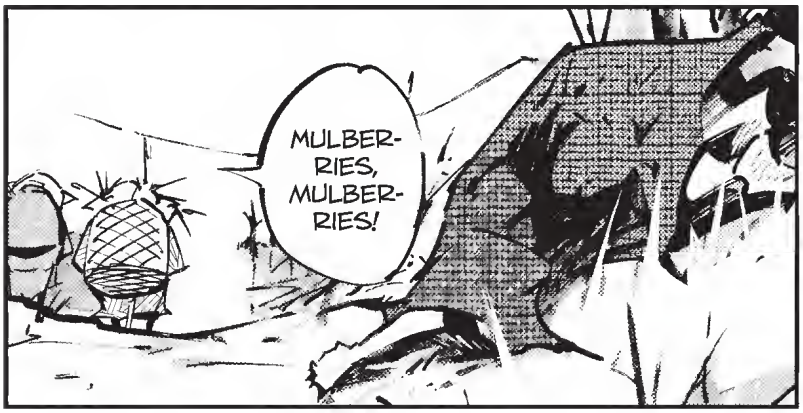


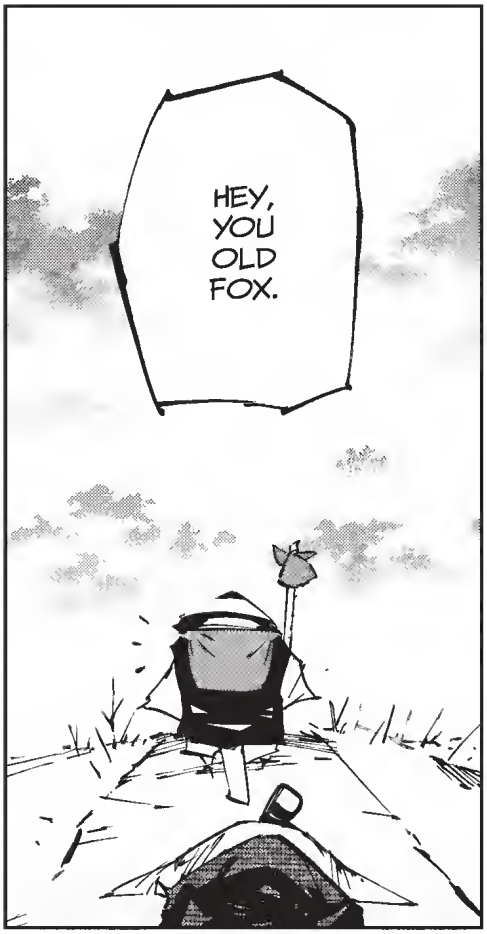
Cooking birds on holy ground, page 93

The bell at Norachiyo's hideout is a *bonshō*, and it tells us that this location is a Buddhist temple. Buddhism is a non-killing religion, and some schools forbid even the killing of an insect. That being the case, killing and eating a bird on temple grounds, even by a non-Buddhist, would be a sign of great disrespect.

Mulberries, page 134

In Japanese, the phrase "*kuwabara, kuwabara,*" or "mulberry field, mulberry field," is used much like the English phrase "knock on wood" to ward off bad luck. Although it is used to ward off all kinds of bad luck, it originated as a way to avoid getting struck by lightning. In this case, however, it is used to ward off any bad luck that may be foreshadowed (or caused) by coming into close proximity with a dead body.





You old fox, page 143

Technically, Norachiyo calls this monk a *tanuki*, which is a raccoon dog native to Japan. Tanuki are known for being cunning and deceptive, similar to how we in the West see foxes. Either way, this priest reminds Norachiyo of a crafty animal that is not a cat.

The great civil war, page 138

In the middle ages, Japan went through a long period of civil unrest, known as the Sengoku Era, or Era of Civil War, during which warlords were constantly fighting for supremacy. One of the major events that brought this era to an end was the Battle of Sekigahara, from which this series gets its name.

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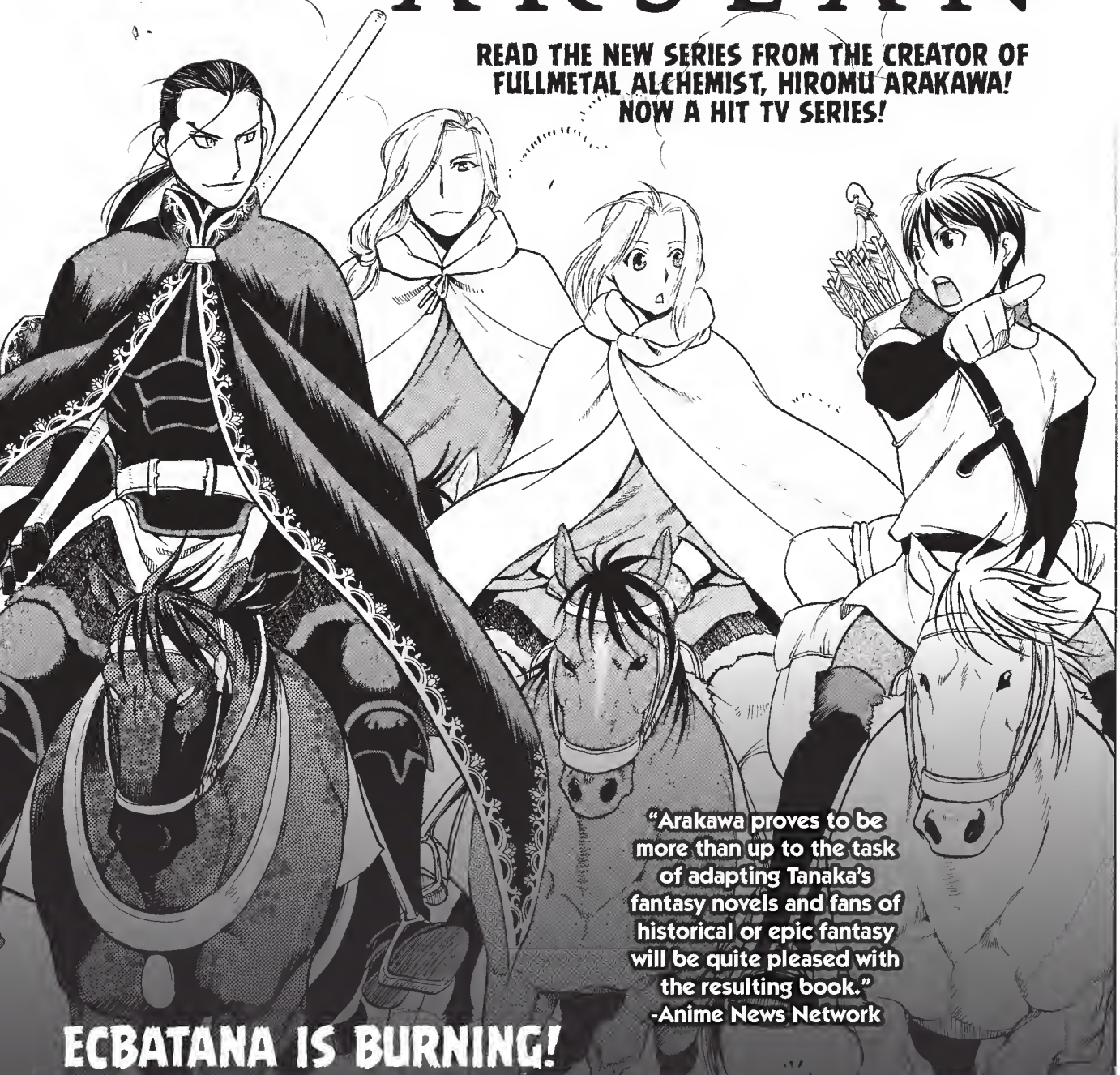

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Nekogahara 1

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English digital edition published by Kodansha Advanced Media, LLC, San Francisco.

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ISBN: 9781682334607

Digital Edition: 1.0.0

Translation: Alethea Nibley & Athena Nibley
Lettering: Scott O. Brown
Editing: Ajani Oloye
Kodansha Comics edition cover design: Phil Balsman